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Fractured Modernity

Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India

SANJAY JOSHI

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For Aya Babu and Sanjam

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Contents

Conventions in the Use of Indian Terms and Citations

Diacritical marks have not been used in transliterations of Indian words Hindi or Urdu pronunciation is sought to be conveyed rather than Sanskrit or Persian orthography Distortions imposed on Indian terms by the language of the colonial bureaucracy have been avoided except for the titles of newspapers and journals as they were spelled in my sources for instance Awadh/Oudh An Urdu or Hindi word is explained the first time it is used Unpublished government department files where in text citations would be unwieldy have been referenced in footnotes

Abbreviations

BIA	British India Association of Oudh papers
CRR	Central Record Room Intelligence Department UP Police
DNB	*Dictionary of National Biography*
GAD	General Administrative Department
GOI	Government of India
Home Poll	Home (Political) Department
INSC	*Annual Report(s) of the Indian National Social Conference* 1890–1916
MIN	*Memorandum on the Vernacular Press of Upper India* 1890 Later *Memorandum on Indian Owned Newspapers Published in English Anglo Vernacular and Vernacular in the United Provinces* 1911–14 and *Memorandum on Newspapers and Periodicals Printed in the United Prov inces* 1918–20
NAI	National Archives of India New Delhi
NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
NWP&O	North Western Provinces and Oudh
PAI	Police Abstract of Intelligence United Provinces 1922–30
PSC	*Proceedings of the Public Service Commission* Volume II *Proceedings Relating to the North Western Provinces and Oudh* Superintendent of Government Printing Calcutta 1887
RPEO	*Reports on the Progress of Education in Oudh* 1871–7
RPI	*Report on Public Instruction in the North Western Provinces and Oudh* 1884–1911
SNP	*Statements of Newspapers and Periodicals Published in the United Prov inces* 1915–25
SVN	*Selections from Vernacular Newspapers published in the Punjab North Western Provinces Oudh and Central Provinces* 1876–1900 Contin ued as *Selections From the Native Newspapers Published in the North Western Provinces and Oudh* 1901–11 and as *Notes on the Press United Provinces of Agra and Oudh* 1923–35
UP	United Provinces of Agra and Oudh Later Uttar Pradesh
UPSA	Uttar Pradesh State Archives Lucknow

Introduction

This book maps the rise of the middle class as a social force in colonial India Despite its wide currency there is surprisingly little agreement on what constitutes the social category called the middle class Landowners industrialists professionals bureaucrats teachers poets and novelists and in more recent times blue collar workers too have all been defined as middle class in one context or another Two contrasting examples highlight the indeterminate character of this social category On the one hand in India an elite that ranks in the top twenty per cent of the population using almost any set of social or economic indicators is termed the middle class In contrast in the United States almost the entire population is sometimes believed to be middle class (Vinovskis 1991) With such varying uses it is perhaps legitimate to wonder if the category has any explanatory value at all Or is the middle class simply a catch all label with no analytical purpose at all?

With decolonization a middle class leadership eventually replaced the British ruling class in India as well as Pakistan This middle class ascendancy was a product of a relatively long historical process and was predicated on the creation of new forms of politics the restructuring of norms of social conduct and the construction of new values guiding domestic as well as public life All these transformations whether political social or cultural reflected the concerns of and indeed the contradictions constitutive of the middle class Far from having no value at all understanding how this middle class was made how it acquired its predominance in public affairs is critical to comprehending much of the cultural and political world around us Not only in India but in most other parts of the world the middle classes played a crucial role in defining what it meant to be modern As inhabitants of a world structured by modernity it is vital that we better understand the middle class

Outlining the importance of the middle class is not the same as understanding it as an analytical category Who were or are the middle classes? What did being middle class entail How can a historical ex[illegible]tion of

the middle class help to better understand the world around us? Closely examining the rise of a middle class in one city in north India over a fifty year period between 1880 and 1930 this study reveals first that traditional sociological indicators of income and occupation cannot take us very far in understanding the social category of the middle class Though its economic background was important the power indeed the constitution of the middle class in India as perhaps over much of the world was based not on the economic power it wielded which was minimal but from the abilities of its members to be cultural entrepreneurs Being middle class this book suggests was primarily a project of self fashioning It argues that the middle classes in colonial north India were constituted not by their social and economic standing but through public sphere politics Understanding the middle class as a project which was constantly in the making rather than a flat sociological fact helps us better understand the middle class and the tensions and contradictions that have necessarily been part of the making of middle class politics in India

The definition and power of the middle class in colonial India came from its propagation of modern ways of life Modernity in this sense represents more than a fixed set of indicators regarding patterns of economic organization social relations or even a single set of cultural values To be modern in colonial India but also perhaps across much of the post Enlightenment world was also an aspiration, a project Understanding modernity not as a fixed destination but an ideology this book examines the Indian middle classes as both the producers and the products of modernity It takes up as a case study colonial Lucknow where much like other urban centres of northern India a hitherto politically insignificant group of men from service communities were able to emerge as the new arbiters of appropriate social conduct and establish new modes of political activity that empowered them at the expense of the traditional elites of the city less powerful social groups and ultimately also the British rulers

Much of the power of this group of men and later women who fashioned themselves as the Indian middle class came from their claim to emulate an ideal typical modernity first appropriated to similar projects by their counterparts in the West But the Indian modernity they constructed also had to be different Examining the making of a middle class in colonial Lucknow allows us to see the similarities between the emergence of modern social relations in India and similar developments in other parts of the world and also the differences This book examines the extent to which the modern imaginings of class gender national

and religious identities in India were tempered with older ideas about appropriate social relations in the middle class imagination Yet rather than understanding these as the products of a typically Indian or even a colonial modernity it argues that the deviations from the pattern of an ideal typical modernity evident in middle class constructions in India were similar to modernist projects in other parts of the world including the West Modernity in India as elsewhere was built on existing foundations The middle classes everywhere used both older resources of power and privilege as well as new ideas about the organization of social and political relations as they constructed the modern These similarities suggest that the case of Lucknow could well be typical of the fractured nature of the project of modernity itself

Even an impressionistic reading of recent events and cultural and political debates in contemporary India points to the often contradictory beliefs that characterize middle class politics This has been most evident in the 1990s in the political agitations spearheaded by Hindu right wing groups over the mosque in Ayodhya (Ludden 1996 Basu et al 1993) and during the agitations against the government s decision to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission for special reservations of jobs in government service for historically deprived lower caste groups (Engineer 1991) What is pertinent for this study are the obviously contradictory political positions taken by middle class leaders and their supporters in both cases Despite virulent anti Muslim rhetoric in their campaign leaders as well as supporters of the Hindu Right repeatedly claim that their campaign is not motivated by an antipathy towards Muslims but is simply seeking justice for the majority community In fact the Hindu Right for a while succeeded in popularizing the term pseudo secularism to characterize those who opposed their agenda claiming that these opponents were abusing ideas of secularism to build up their vote banks among Muslims Ironically then a movement aiming to mobilize a religiously defined community claimed for itself the mantle of true secularism During the agitation against the implementation of the Mandal Commission report too upper caste educated urban youth of the middle class framed their agenda as an agitation against casteist politics as if their existing privileges had nothing to do with their upper caste status At a less politically volatile level we see the similar articulation of apparently contradictory ideas about the functioning of democratic or representative institutions where educated middle class elites decry the way in which political norms have been undermined by the presence of lower caste and class groups yet claim to stand for democracy These contradictions are most apparent in the

middle class discourse about women who are sought to be disciplined simultaneously as modern and traditional subjects

The study of the middle class in colonial north India reveals the pres ence of similar simultaneous articulations of what appear to be contra dictory positions on issues relating to politics society and culture Of course one can read these as well as contemporary middle class posi tions as instances of simple hypocrisy or political double speak This book argues however that such contradictions are better understood if we see them as products of a fractured modernity The modernity cre ated in colonial north India consisted of a stitching together of older and newer ideas as educated men and women needed both in their attempt to constitute themselves as a middle class Closely examining the mak ing of a middle class in one city of colonial India therefore allows us to better appreciate the contradictory pressures that came to constitute this middle class and perhaps the sort of contradictions that bedevil middle class politics to this day

Despite the crucial importance of the social group Indian history has more or less ignored the middle class in recent years Scholars of the 1950s and 1960s did use the term extensively but for most part assumed the middle classes to be a self evident sociological category which did not need further explanation This was typified for instance in B B Misra s seminal work on the Indian middle classes who argued that since most of us without the aid of a specialist understand what we mean when we use the term he saw little need or value in trying to reach more precise definitions of the middle class (Misra 1983 1) Instead Misra has presented us with a rich introduction to the history of the commercial landed educated and professional middle classes Misra also argued that though there were possibilities for the development of an independent middle class in pre colonial India the immobility of the caste organization and despotism of the bureaucracy precluded such a development (ibid 9) To a large extent this first—and it is telling of the historiographical fate of the category that it remains to date the most extensive—study of the Indian middle class concurs with earlier assump tions of colonial administrators Misra like the British officials before him, saw the middle classes in colonial India simply as a product of Eng lish education, rule of law and the capitalist economy introduced by the British in India

On the other hand we have scholars who deny the existence of a real middle class in India altogether Working on revisionist interpreta tions of Indian nationalism historians from Cambridge University in the 1970s saw educated Indians acting as clients of other powerful people

and completely without an independent political agenda[1] (Gallagher et al 1973 Seal 1973) Michelguglielmo Torri built on these ideas to argue that the devastating intervention of the Cambridge school historians exploded a master concept of Indian historiography and signed the death warrant of the middle class as a category of Indian history (Torri 1991) Describing members as of this class urban non capitalist bourgeoisie he suggests that it was precisely because of their role as intellectuals that the so called middle class suffered the delusion of belonging to an autonomous social group endowed with a political weight of its own (ibid 39)

There are two related problems with these approaches First they take the middle class to be a fully formed sociologically bounded category defined primarily by economic indicators while ignoring the extent to which social classes do not simply emerge but are made (Thompson 1964) Overemphasizing structure and economic factors they downplay the significance of cultural capital and human agency as an important basis for middle class as other class formations (Bourdieu 1987) Even more significantly a review of the writing on the Indian middle class from the 1960s to the 1990s reveals that any discussion of this category continues to be inhibited by comparisons with an ideal type of the category derived ultimately from rather simplistic readings of European history There is thus a tendency to posit a somewhat idealized notion of class formation and unity and compare it to the more messy terrain of historical reality only to find it wanting Torri for instance uses the example of the supposedly failed project of social reform in India as demonstrative of the limited social base of the intellectuals Deriving his arguments from a model of a real middle class presumably based upon the European experience Torri argues that if a modern and politically dominant middle class had existed [in India] the social reforms could have been implemented as an expression of [its] cultural hegemony (Torri 1991) Harjot Oberoi sums up this understanding of the middle class which has virtually acquired the status of common sense In his otherwise fascinating study of the construction of modern Sikhism, Oberoi rejects the applicability of the term middle class to Indian history because he sees this category as a product of Europe s historical experience of industrialization In India on the other hand petty bureaucrats and urban professionals could at best only dream of industrialization thus this non productive class could not appropriately be named middle class (Oberoi 1994 260)

[1] For a critique of the Cambridge school position see S Sarkar 1983 Introduction also Hardiman 1982.

A more careful examination even in European or North American history however reveals some significant ambiguities about the use of this category (Blumin 1985 Stearns 1979 Vinovskis 1991) Does the industrial bourgeoisie alone constitute the middle class? Surely not as that would exclude the central role of cultural entrepreneurs—the teachers the journalists the novelists the politicians etc —from our understanding of the middle class What exactly *was* the relationship between these groups and the Industrial Revolution? Recent studies seem to emphasize the extent to which this foundational middle class too was a product of conscious interventions in social and public life of nineteenth century England or the United States (Davidoff and Hall 1991 Ryan 1981) Though the Industrial Revolution forms an important backdrop to their study of the middle class Mary Ryan as well as Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall focus on the centrality of cultural projects and particularly the recasting of gender relations within the family to the construction of a middle class in England or the United States Dror Wahrman s analysis goes further in challenging prevalent ideas about the middle class Suggesting that arguments about an Industrial Revolution leading to an inevitable rise of the middle class are more a mythical construct than historical reality Wahrman contends that the idea of a middle class was actually the product of political representations carried out in the public sphere (Wahrman 1995) Much like colonial Lucknow it seems the image of Britain as a middle class society came into being through the language of writers and speakers as found in those means of public communication geared towards interventions in the political process and towards audiences interested in such interventions (ibid 10) Instead of a fixed sociological category bounded by income or occupation Wahrman argues that in Britain the precise social referent of the notion of middle class" was far from being well defined and indeed that this vagueness often served the purpose of its users (ibid 16) Increasingly scholarship elsewhere in the world too is emphasizing the middle class not only as a project of self constitution with only indirect links to economic power but also emphasizing the importance of social manners morals and values as integral to middle class formation (French 1996 Owensby 1999)

Important social economic and political changes accompanying British rule in India undoubtedly presented new opportunities to educated men and a little later women as well But ultimately being middle class in India as elsewhere was a project of self fashioning To highlight cultural projects as central to middle class formation is not to deny the significance of either economic structure or indeed historical context of changes

in the nature of legal and economic regimes which accompanied the transition to colonialism The one objective factor that distinguished most people who came to be termed middle class in colonial India was the fact that they belonged to the upper strata of society but not at the apex Most of them were upper caste Hindus or *Ashraf* (high born) Muslims and many came from the so called service communities that is from families and social groups who had traditionally served in the courts of indigenous rulers and large landlords Not only did this mean that such men had sufficient economic resources but also that they possessed sufficient educational training to shape and participate in public debates during the colonial era Education and literary accomplishments had of course been valued for long before the British came to India Court officials religious leaders and men of letters the north Indian ecumene did comment on social matters and were occasionally even allowed the licence to be critical of the rulers and their administration (C Bayly 1996) Yet their social and political importance was relatively insignificant until the latter half of the nineteenth century

Many of the men active in the colonial public sphere did share some similarities in economic background because for most part they came from families which were financially comfortable but not rich enough to not need to earn a living—quite unlike the large hereditary landlords or the remnants of an indigenous aristocracy Education was the most important and marketable skill with family traditions stressing educational achievements In north India at least in the second half of the nineteenth century sons of these families gravitated towards the schools and colleges set up by the British in India, and some even went to England to pursue higher degrees Thus another objective indicator distinguishing the middle class in colonial India was its exposure to western style education But merely the knowledge of English similarity of family background or even exposure to western education did not transform Ashrafs Kayasthas Brahmins Khatris or Banias of north India into a middle class This was achieved through cultural entrepreneurship

Defining the middle class in colonial north India then necessarily takes us beyond simple economic indicators of income and occupation Sharing certain similarities in social and economic background such as education occupation or profession a certain group of people became producers and products of a new cultural politics in a transformed historical context This initiation of new cultural politics which allowed them to articulate and share a new set of beliefs values and modes of politics clearly distinguished the middle class from other social groups Upper caste Hindus or Ashraf Muslim men did deploy traditional status

to set themselves apart from other social groups But more important in the emergence of a distinctive middle class was their transformation of traditional cultural values and the basis of social hierarchy A hitherto less significant group of intellectuals and bureaucrats did not become key political and social figures merely by the objective circumstances of their existence Cultural entrepreneurship is what provided them ascendance in the social and political life of the country As elsewhere around the world probably a middle class emerged from processes where intellectuals and activists created a new and distinctive social category through a self conscious interposition between people of rank and the common people (Williams 1983 63) Focusing on such self conscious interpositions this book highlights the agency of the middle class in its own making

Central to this process was a model of middle class ness which Indians adopted with alacrity Even if Britain was not a middle class society by the end of the nineteenth century public sphere representations had certainly succeeded in creating that impression (Wahrman 1995) Western educated Indians were quick to adopt this model to suit their own circumstances and represent themselves as a middle class with a social cultural and political agenda distinct from a feudal or decadent indigenous elite as well as lower classes in need of disciplining or improvement Ironically enough ultimately the logic of this model derived from a British example led them to establish their differences from and assert power over the British rulers Through such projects a distinctive middle class identity emerged These projects are the focus of this book

It was modern forms of politics that is the new ways in which educated men configured social relations that really made the middle class distinct from other social groups in colonial India These imaginations sought to create a new sort of social body often drawing on models derived from Victorian Britain but tempered by their own circumstances A close look at the construction of an Indian middle class in a local milieu reveals multiple often contradictory pressures constituting middle class politics in colonial India. It certainly demonstrates the extent to which traditional ideas played a role in the construction of modern ideas about religion community gender relations and the nation Thus modern ideas of the middle class about politics contained elements drawn from much older ideas about political and social organization its belief in modernization coexisted with the reinforcing of older hierarchies its nationalism was complicit with what has been termed communalism and its belief in progress was simultaneous with its advocacy of tradition

The recent Subaltern Studies historians move towards studying structures of dominance in colonial India have led to some fruitful interventions in the history of the middle class in this respect Emphasizing the hegemonic aspirations of the colonial middle classes subalternist interventions have focused on the ambiguities of middle class nationalism in colonial India and pointed to the contradictory and fragmented nature of the modern produced by the Indian middle classes Inspired by the work of Edward Said (1978) however the post colonial turn of the Subaltern Studies project has often given undue importance to the presumed pervasiveness of colonial discourse (S Sarkar 1997) Middle class attempts at carving out a presence in colonial India have been interpreted as a derivative discourse (Chatterjee 1986) Ironically in this case at least the post colonial attempt to cast off paradigms of western modernity ends up re establishing the middle class as exclusively a product of western modernity Other subalternist interventions have gone further in recognizing the extent to which the constitution of the modern in colonial India contained much that drew upon older ideas about appropriate social roles and behaviour (Chakrabarty 1994 1992) Yet once again the necessity of critiquing the master narratives framed by notions of an ideal typical modernity drives them to celebrate this difference in the nature of the modern in colonial India as something that cannot be historicized at all as a subaltern past not amenable to analysis by the tools even of the best intentioned historian (Chakrabarty 1998)

In many senses this book may be read as an extended conversation with the Subalternists Much of what is argued here builds on the important work that subalternist scholars have undertaken with some important points of difference It is undoubtedly important to critique the Eurocentric models of history which inform and inhibit understandings of non western histories and nowhere is this more evident than in the history of the Indian middle class Focusing exclusively on contesting colonial categories does however overlook the agency of middle class Indians in constructing the contradictory impulses characterizing their politics in colonial India While recognizing middle class politics as fractured this book suggests that this is a history still readable as a coherent (if contradictory) project of a social group seeking to empower itself at the expense of its social superiors and inferiors The middle class of colonial India was undoubtedly a product of British rule It was only by using ideas and institutions which came with colonial rule and because of social changes and disruptions initiated by colonialism that a group of western educated men and later women from the upper strata of society

came to constitute themselves as a middle class Yet close attention to middle class politics also shows that it was as much as active agent in this process as it was a product of larger political economic and social changes The process of constituting itself as a middle class necessarily entailed an attempt to simultaneously hold on to contradictory posi tions Though such fractures and contradictions appear to point to a difference of its political agenda from ideal typical western models of middle class ness exploring these in greater detail may actually offer an opportunity to rethink such ideal types not only in India but across much of the world

LUCKNOW HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SOCIAL CHANGE

In order to understand how a middle class was created and acquired prominence this book examines the history of one city in colonial north India Lucknow Though the formation of the middle class was obviously a trans regional phenomenon a micro study allows us to examine fairly closely the historical processes contributing to it and also explore in detail the different and contradictory strands which went into the mak ing of a middle class rather than see it as a monolith This is not a book only about Lucknow but a tight geographical focus allows us to better understand the cohesion and contradictions integral to the formation of a middle class in colonial India

The stereotypical images of Lucknow usually evokes the picture of nawabs and their courts and the associated high culture Fictional rep resentations of Lucknow have reinforced this image of a city whose his tory ended in 1857 [2] Such is the power of timeless images that even the Indian Railways an institution of the contemporary Indian state wel comed travellers to Lucknow the city of the Nawabs almost a hundred and forty years after the deposition of the last ruling nawab of Awadh [3] In more scholarly works Lucknow has figured primarily as the site of interaction between the emerging colonial power and the last of the major native states (Barnett 1980 Fisher 1987) The events of 1857 and the post annexation pacification of the city have also captured the

[2] Two films which have done much to perpetuate the nawabi image of Lucknow in popular imagination have been Satyajit Ray s *Shatranj ke Khilari* (The Chess Players) and Muzaffar Ali s *Umrao Jaan* Both are based on earlier works of fiction—Ray s film on a story by Premchand and Ali s film on the novel *Umrao Jan Ada* (Ruswa 1987)

[3] Announcement on the *Shatabdi Express*, a high speed train running between Lucknow and New Delhi 1992 Personal observation

imagination of contemporary historians (R Mukherjee 1984 Oldenburg 1989 Pemble 1977) Apart from kings and nawabs the only natives of Lucknow who have found a place in historical writings about the city have been the Taluqdars large landowners whom the colonial adminis tration tried to project as the natural rulers of the people—a role they tried very hard to live up to but with only limited success (TR Metcalf 1979 Reeves 1991) These images stories and films about Lucknow and surprisingly even scholarly studies obscure the history of an impor tant social group in the city the middle class

The mythical origins of Lucknow are said to go as far back as Lakshman the brother of Rama the king of Ayodhya In a park on the central road of Lucknow Hazratganj a bust of a male figure is dedicated to Lakshman the founder of Lucknow In more historical times Lucknow was a sig nificant urban centre by the sixteenth century The Mughal emperor Humayun raised ten thousand rupees and fifty horses during a brief four hour halt in the town Akbar chose Lucknow as the seat of the governor of the province when he reorganized the empire in 1590 Aurangzeb the last of the Great Mughals visited Lucknow and en dowed the Firangi Mahal seminary which remains an important Sunni theological centre (Oldenburg 1989 6–7) But the city really began to flourish when the royal court of the Awadh nawabs was transferred from Faizabad to Lucknow in 1774 It is to this eighty year period of the city s history between 1774 and 1856 that we can trace the origins of the per sistent images of Lucknow s courtly culture The need to establish their legitimacy as rulers particularly after the break with the Mughal empire led to lavish spending on ritual and ceremonial occasions by the nawabs of Awadh. This also contributed to the need to attract and patronize the best literary and artistic talent available and evolve a distinctive iden tity for the Lucknow court (Fisher 1993 71–9) It was the emulation of the values of this court by courtiers and those associated with the court which created the nawabi culture of Lucknow The annexation of Awadh by the British created a major disruption in this historical process The centre around which court culture existed itself collapsed Colonial administrators reshaped the city and broke up communities (Oldenburg 1989 39–41) New opportunities accompanied the disruptions A new power and a new political and cultural ethos came to prevail in Lucknow once the nawabi court was removed Whatever remained of the older Lucknow culture associated with the court was steadily marginalized as people sought to negotiate the altered circumstances of their existence

It is reasonable to expect that once the nawabi court itself disappeared changes would also occur in the larger cultural pattern which had grown

around it But such changes are rarely drastic or immediate Ratan Nath Sarshar s novel *Fasana i Azad* first published at the end of the 1870s shows many of the nawabi habits and cultural institutions such as the houses of the courtesans still extant in the city (Premchand 1987) Abdul Halim Sharar s detailed account of cultural life in the city depicts the many esoteric pastimes and elaborate refinements in lifestyle characteristic of the nawabi era persisting till the early years of the twentieth century (Sharar 1989) The existence of many members of the old aristocracy in colonial Lucknow the *Wasiqadars* (pensioners of the erstwhile royal family) for instance ensured that old ways would not die away immediately (Oldenburg 1989 Hill 1991) The taluqdari patronage of the institutions of courtly Lucknow and their taste for luxuries old and new also helped the city retain part of the ambience of the nawabi days of old (Oldenburg 1989 TR Metcalf 1979) Despite the many developments of the city by colonial administrators and native improvers alike Lucknow retained at least a part of the nawabi architectural legacy well into the colonial period There is therefore some albeit limited historical basis for continuing to refer to Lucknow as a nawabi city in the early years of the colonial era

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century however and certainly so by the early decades of the twentieth century the nawabi aristocracy played a very insignificant role in Lucknow s public affairs The landed gentry—the taluqdars—were too busy lobbying for their collective and individual interests through their connections with sympathetic administrators (Reeves 1991) It is also possible that they considered themselves too aristocratic to enter this public world A novel by Attia Hosain—who grew up in a taluqdari family herself—represents them as contemptuous of politics and disdainful of horse trading for votes (Hosain 1987) Rather than nawabs and taluqdars it was a group of western educated men largely in professional or literary occupations often from families with a tradition of service in native royal courts—in other words middle class Lucknavis (residents of Lucknow)—who came to play an increasingly visible and vocal role in the political social and cultural life of the city

In the colonial period Lucknow ranked fourth among the cities of India after the three Presidency towns and was the eighth largest city of the British empire in the 1880s (Oldenburg 1989) The changes that accompanied colonial rule also created circumstances favouring the emergence of a socially and politically significant middle class For one British rule helped destroy the political material and ideological basis of the existing ruling classes in India Political changes signalled the demise

of a larger ruling class of nobles and intellectuals dependent upon the patronage of rulers and courts Furthermore not only were emperors rajas or nawabs stripped of political power but missionary evangelical and utilitarian critiques constantly undermined the legitimacy of the moral and cultural order supported by these rulers Disruptions in traditional social and cultural hierarchies provided room for the emergence of a new leadership These were the products of British established schools and colleges who now fashioned themselves as a middle class

The activities of these western educated men transformed existing patterns of life in Lucknow Though they certainly built their own world on existing foundations middle class interventions also significantly altered political social and cultural life in the city Nawabi patronage had attracted some of the best Urdu writers to Lucknow With middle class interventions Lucknow continued as an important centre of Urdu literature though the patronage of the royal court gave way to the emergence of Lucknow as an important centre of commercial publishing Munshi Newal Kishore s press not only published many contemporary authors but also published the works of old masters of Urdu and Persian (*Uttar Pradesh* 1981) In spite of the presence of a cultural centre like Banaras and the politically vibrant city of Allahabad in the same province Lucknow became the foremost centre for publication in the North Western Provinces and Oudh (NWP&O) in the late nineteenth century The first daily vernacular newspaper of the NWP&O was published from Lucknow when Newal Kishore brought out the *Oudh Akhbar* in 1858 The paper maintained its unique status as a vernacular daily of the NWP&O for a long time and even later was only overtaken by other Lucknow papers as the largest circulating Urdu newspaper in the province (*MIN* 1911 1912 1914 1918–20)

Politically with middle class leadership Lucknow emerged as an important centre of nationalist activity though the presence of the Nehru family among other important political leaders like Madan Mohan Malaviya gave neighbouring Allahabad a definite edge in nationalist politics Yet Lucknow was hardly a political backwater. Ganga Prasad Varma and many other Lucknavis attended the inaugural session of the Indian National Congress in 1885 and Varma was the moving force behind the Congress in Awadh in addition to his active involvement in municipal politics where he was clearly identified as the leader of the Congress camp Lucknow possibly because it lost out to its urban rival as the provincial capital after the amalgamation of the North Western Provinces with Oudh in 1877 never became the kind of Congress stronghold which Allahabad did It was however, important enough to host

one of the fifteen annual sessions held in the nineteenth century Within Lucknow the Congress was considered important enough for a faction in the city to petition the government to try and prevent a Congress session from being held in the city and for Munshi Nawal Kishore to host meetings against the Congress at his home [4]

The presence of the ruling Shia Muslim nawabs had certainly given the city of Lucknow a distinctly Islamic flavour With colonial rule and middle class intervention, Lucknow remained an important centre of Islamic education though it lost some of the Shia predominance of the nawabi era The Firangi Mahal seminary for instance was an extremely important institution well into the 1920s producing leaders of the Khilafat movement such as Abdul Bari (Minault 1982) Political necessity and cultural confidence had produced a degree of pluralism or cultural syncretism in the courts of nawabi Lucknow Colonial policies and middle class interventions changed the ways in which religious identities were imagined In the place of pluralism came a more exclusivist notion of religious identity Lucknow now became an important centre of what came to be known as Muslim politics a phrase unknown if not redundant in the nawabi era (Ganju 1980 Hill 1991) Muslim visibility also gave a particular edge to Hindu–Hindi revivalism in Lucknow during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries After Lucknow s most serious Hindu–Muslim riot in 1924 a prominent Hindi magazine exulted Now it seems that Hindus do live in this city and not just Muslims (*Madhuri* January 1925 848–9) Similarly proponents of Hindi in Lucknow spoke with particular glee at their successes in Lucknow the citadel of Urdu (*Pancham Hindi Sahitya Sammelan* 1915) Given this history Lucknow also becomes a particularly significant site for exploring middle class constructions of modern religious identities

Grounding this study of middle class formation and politics in one urban centre permits the familiarity with details of events and personalities to challenge many prevailing assumptions about the subject This in turn allows this book to sketch a more complex and nuanced account of middle class formation and its constructions of cultural and political identities than would have been possible in a broader survey over colonial India It is however still important to keep in mind that there were also some important ways in which the history of Lucknow was unique Probably owing to a different pattern of land tenure in the province there was little of the *rentier* component in the social group which con

[4] NWP&O GAD (Block) file 385C GAD 1898–9 file 106C/772 (UPSA) Also *SVN* 20 April 1898 271

stituted itself as a middle class in Lucknow as distinct from say Calcutta (T Sarkar 1993) Unlike Surat the merchants the *mahajans* of Lucknow kept a low profile in public affairs through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Haynes 1991) Its history ensured that there was religious plurality and possibilities of the creation of new sorts of pubic religious identities in Lucknow in a way that was distinct from say middle class politics in the Madras Presidency (Irschick 1994) The continuing presence of a nawabi ethos and the attempt of the British to promote the taluqdars as a new set of natural rulers in the city also gave an anti aristocratic edge to middle class formation in Lucknow less visible at other urban centres

Though the context is obviously important for this study of the middle class this book does not aim at being an urban history of Lucknow like Veena Talwar Oldenburg s masterly study of the city during the early years of colonial rule Rather in this work Lucknow serves as a site whose history helps question existing ideas about middle class formation within British India and suggest new ways of understanding this critically important social class and the new politics it unleashed in colonial north India This book therefore highlights the role of the middle class in the emergence of new politics of representation novel constructions of womanhood in transforming religiosity and in its imagination and mobilization of new nationalisms These were issues central not only to the middle class of colonial Lucknow but to its contemporaries across colonial India whether in Surat Calcutta or in Madras Though focusing on Lucknow allows for a closer and more complex understanding of the middle class this study of Lucknow aims to contribute to larger arguments about these hotly contested issues in the history of colonial India Given that issues of representation nationalism, the woman question and the politics of religion and ethnicity have become important in the histories of the middle class in other parts of the world these Lucknow centric explorations may well have a wider global significance

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY AND CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Between them nationalism gender and religion arguably comprise the most studied aspects of social political and cultural history of late colonial India Furthermore virtually all of the scholarship on these important questions has recognized the central role played by middle clas activists in shaping such politics Why then go over ground so well trodden and that too by some of the finest historians of our times? Probably the most significant though in retrospect also the most obvious point

that this book makes is to emphasize that we cannot understand these critical issues in the politics of colonial (and post colonial) India without understanding the extent to which they were all products of middle class politics Without understanding issues like nationalism religious revivalism language representational politics and even feminist politics at least to some extent as shaped by the contrary pressures constituting the middle class in this era our understanding of these important aspects of political life remains incomplete

Without understanding the class location of the actors involved in these social movements there is also a danger of reifying categories like nationalism communalism religion or even feminism An instance of such a possibility is even evident in Partha Chatterjee s insightful study of Indian nationalism (Chatterjee 1993) Chatterjee certainly recognizes the extent to which nationalism was a product of middle class aspirations to counter hegemony and sought to tame discipline or marginalize various unruly fragmentary visions that did not fit its vision of a modern nation Yet it is nationalism which forms the basis of Chatterjee s *explanatory* framework for ultimately it is the contestation between the nationalists and the colonial state which Chatterjee sees as driving the middle class leaders to certain modes of politics Attributing primacy to nationalism in this context means that the hegemonic aspirations of the middle class necessarily become secondary to such explanations and their contradictions thus need to be explained as defensive manoeuvres in the face of an oppressive colonial order A similar reification of the politics of religious identities of communalism has for long characterized Indian historiography (Pandey 1990) Without seeing both religious as well as secular nationalism as products of middle class politics we cannot for instance explain why middle class supporters constantly moved between these two positions without being able to maintain either one consistently

At another level the reification of religion (or the alternative term faith) has led Ashis Nandy to posit these as alternatives to the modernity unleashed by colonialism and then the westernized middle class in India Yet religion was no more untouched by the modernity of colonialism or the middle class than any other aspect of public life in India Focusing on middle class interventions in this arena we are better able to understand how religion or faith was not just transformed but could also serve as a resource in the politics of the public sphere Such a focus allows this book to explore the transformations in Hindu religiosity accompanying middle class interventions as well as the limits of such politics Instead of an alternative to modernity then, we can better nderstand

how modernity shaped religion and also ways in which religiosity shaped middle class modernity in colonial India

Feminist historiography in India has struggled with explaining the in consistencies in the positions taken by early women s organizations and their leadership on feminist issues For most part explanations of these inconsistencies have been understood in terms of necessary compromises with a male dominated nationalist leadership or in a more critical vein as betrayals of the feminist cause (Forbes 1981 1996 Jayawardena 1986) In contrast understanding this politics as the product of contra dictions constitutive of middle class politics helps this book offer a more nuanced and historically grounded explanation of such inconsistencies Examining the ways in which the social background of early feminist interventions in the public sphere in Lucknow involved both a critique of and complicity with certain patriarchal norms this book suggests the impossibility of seeing feminist politics as any more autonomous of middle class contradictions than other political endeavours of a middle class political leadership

While there are certainly important contributions that a focus on the middle class can make to our understanding of the modern world there are important limitations to the approach adopted in this book as well For one this work focuses entirely on public sphere activities of the middle class Missing from this study of the middle class are the details of do mestic life lived social relations within the family and with people who served it in the capacity of servants In part this is owing to a paucity of sources on such intimate matters Any understanding of the middle class must however remain incomplete without paying attention to these crucial aspects of social life Even within the realms of public politics limits imposed by publishers stipulations of manuscript length have led to excision of some of the detail which may have contributed to a richer though perhaps more tedious account of middle class life My own limi tations of time have precluded attention to other important indicators reflecting aspects of middle class life in Lucknow For instance details about lives within middle class professions or changes in the way they used and conceived of space in public and at home may have had much to tell us about the middle class

Though the chapters in this book do focus fairly narrowly on public sphere politics of the middle class in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century north India and leave some important gaps in our understanding of everyday middle class existence they also I hope raise some questions and highlight issues of some interest to readers Chapter One examines how a group of relatively insignificant men primarily

though not exclusively from family backgrounds in the service gentry were able to establish themselves as the arbiters of social political and cultural conduct in colonial Lucknow Relatively insignificant of course does not imply that these were men without any importance at all in the old order As administrators literary figures or merely as part of a recognizably respectable class upper caste Hindu or Ashraf Muslim men already had high status in nawabi society Yet outside of influence within their respective areas of specialization they were not a group who for instance determined the canons of respectability in Lucknow of the nawabs British rule in Lucknow changed much of this Taking to the training offered in educational institutions set up by the British and using new forms of organization and communication a younger generation of men began to emerge as adepts of Lucknow s public sphere in the late nineteenth century The public sphere became the site of class formation for middle classes in north India in the second half of the nineteenth century

The construction of new norms of respectability was critical to the middle class project Yet like other projects of middle class modernity their rhetoric of publicity too was constituted through multiple sometimes contrary agenda To distinguish themselves from the nawabs and taluqdars middle class men deployed ideas of equality and meritocracy derived ultimately from the tradition of the Enlightenment At the same time they evidently did not identify with the lower classes the majority of the public they claimed to represent To create distinctions between themselves and the lower classes they relied on ideas of hierarchy derived from traditions that had buttressed their earlier respectable status

Taking the middle class imagination of gender relations as a point of entry Chapter Two explores another set of disjunctures in middle class projects of improvement Examining the ways in which middle class men sought to discipline and reconstruct women this chapter demonstrates how new constructions of womanhood emerged from middle class interventions in the public sphere These constructions like other middle class projects rested on contrary foundations incorporating as they did both modern ideas about women s education and emancipation, as well as a reiteration of much older patriarchal norms Though middle class interventions did succeed in bringing together the traditional and the modern the Indian and the European, the *Sangam'* they created was an uneasy one Middle class interventions created a modernity where both Manu as well as Mill and Macaulay could be points of reference It was a modernity that certainly helped men to create newer forms of control over women but at least for the women willing to par

ticipate in it this modern also created spaces where they could contest male domination or at least create a space for their own interests and inclinations Middle class feminist interventions though critical of some aspects of the male patriarchal order could not always transcend the contradictory pulls of their class position either demonstrating both points of difference as well as complicity with the malestream agenda Ultimately middle class politics neither allowed for untrammelled male patriarchy nor for completely autonomous feminist politics

Focusing on the transformation of Hindu religiosity Chapter Three looks at how middle class men sought to tame and discipline a huge variety of cultural practices in an attempt to produce a singular vision of Hinduism The importance of religious identities was not the result of primordial attachments nor indeed did such identities represent a re treat' to an uncolonized domain but were a product of modernity as middle class activists actively reshaped the domain of the political through transforming and reinterpreting religion in ways that furthered their own agenda Blending humanist and liberal ideas with older philosophical precepts of Vedantic thought late nineteenth century middle class activists attempted to produce a new anthropocentric Hindu religiosity Rather than being concerned with ritual worship or quotidian existence this new publicized Hindu religiosity was more concerned with the creation of a Hindu national community Seeking to transcend deeply imbedded notions of hierarchy middle class Hindu religiosity was committed to the construction of a singular Hindu community one which could then be represented mobilized and defended by middle class activists in the public sphere Much like other aspects of public sphere politics in colonial India the vision of a singular Hindu community too was riven with contradictions Attempts to mobilize a Hindu community often made these contradictions very visible especially as the vision of an undivided Hindu community came into conflict with hierarchical beliefs and practices equally important for the middle class to maintain its social hegemony

With all its contradictions and fractures middle class recasting of religious ideas created new discursive templates for modern politics in colonial India It enabled for instance the virulently anti Muslim Hindu nationalism in the twentieth century The ability to selectively interpret past traditions however, also provided a powerful tool to social reformers lower caste groups seeking social mobility and to ardent secular nationalists The transformation of religious ideas as they were brought to serve middle class interests in the politics of the public sphere ultimately shaped many aspects of modern politics in colonial India allowing for many

different voices and interpretations many different possibil ties of polit ical activism and many different imaginations of the self and the other

A focus on middle class politics allows Chapter Four to explain the disjuncture—the aporia —in nationalist ideologies which often tries to accommodate contradictory elements within the same framework In India one of the forms taken by this disjuncture is the simultaneous im agination of India as a secular and a Hindu nation For the most part middle class activists particularly from the 1920s represented the na tion as an entity which stood above less salient divisions of community caste class, or gender As the people who were increasingly coming to define (and later to rule) this nation this elevation of nationalism to the supreme value of public life obviously worked to their advantage Yet close attention to the articulations and activities of middle class Lucknavis reveals considerable tension in their imagination of what or who consti tuted the nation Challenges posed by Muslim nationalism often evoked a more parochial vision of the nation from the Hindu middle class Per ceived affronts to the Hindu community particularly in accounts of Hindu–Muslim riots drew impassioned defence of Hindu rights and vitriolic anti Muslim rhetoric from the middle class champions of Hindu pride This support for Hindu pride was however articulated in emi nently reasonable terms as befitted the self image of the enlightened arbiters of public opinion But this reasonability and a very real fear of lower class violence during riots also prevented middle class Hindus in Lucknow from advocating a full throated Hindu supremacist position Ultimately middle class politics in colonial Lucknow constantly oscil lated between support for plural secular nationalism and an exclusivist Hindu nationalist identity Examining the roots of the enthusiasm as well as the ambivalence that marks middle class participation in nation alist projects this chapter outlines some of the reasons why middle class nationalist politics produced political identities that were protean and impermanent and points to the limits of modern politics

The middle class in colonial Lucknow as in most other places prob ably was a product both of traditional status and new opportunities In Lucknow it was only possible for men and women who already enjoyed a certain social position and economic advantages to deploy their ideas in the public sphere institutions so as to transform existing notions of re spectability to their own advantage The very project of being middle class was based on the creation of distinctions Middle class men and later women drew these distinctions by drawing on both new ideas and institutions but also their existing resources of privilege A certain duality was therefore constitutive of the middle class It is important to keep in

mind of course that the characterization of middle class politics as in herently contradictory is at some level of generalization There were certainly middle class individuals whose politics was much more uni tary Yet in some way the project of being middle class necessitated embracing contrary positions These contradictions certainly enabled many of the middle class projects examined in this book but also served to limit their political agenda

So for instance it was not that middle class activists indulged in double speak when they claimed to represent a public in their advocacy of emancipation of women a Hinduism beyond caste or a plural Indian nation The contradictions of their politics emerged from contrary pulls of their social situation On the one hand ideas and institutions that came with colonial rule allowed them to represent themselves as en lightened representatives of public opinion through which they sought to replace the nawabi paradigm of respectability in Lucknow But it was equally important for men who were traditionally a part of respectable society on the other hand to also clearly distinguish themselves from the lower orders In the latter they could not but use a more traditional vocabulary with which they were quite familiar, given their respectable status in pre colonial Lucknow and thus emphasize the inherent inferi ority of the lower classes While this duality certainly allowed them to emerge as the opinion makers in Lucknow it also limited their agenda in that middle class politics continued to retain a profound ambivalence about popular politics which it sought to discipline and mobilize (Guha 1992) rather than persuade and include in its political endeavours

Taking into account new ideas about gender relations makes the social origins of the contradictions in middle class positions even more appar ent Middle class interventions constructed a new ideology of gender relations which deployed new ideas about the equality of the sexes the importance of education and modern training for women and a much older ideology of *stridharma* which can best be described as husband worship This stitching together of older and newer ideas created a mod ernity full of tensions and ambivalence which, while allowing for a cer tain disciplining of women also provided opportunities for critiques of patriarchy Limits framed by their own middle class lifestyles however, also prevented women from breaking completely with the discourse on gender relations created by a fractured modernity Middle class feminist politics therefore continued to maintain a relationship with modernity and tradition which was at least as ambivalent as that of the men

Middle class contradictions evident in its ideas about religion and the nation equally reflect the contrary pulls arising from the circumstances

of its existence rather than any conscious effort at duplicity or deception The new religiosity of the middle class was not a guise or cover for some other real political interest The modern religiosity it sought to construct revealed however the contrary pulls of its social political and intellectual agenda Similarly its oscillation between secular and religious nationalism was not simply a political tactic but a product of the fact that in the 1920s both secular and religious imaginings were equally critical to middle class nationalism These contradictions too enabled yet limited middle class politics both allowing it a more significant presence in the political arena yet circumscribing the extent to which it could take its reformist nationalist or revivalist agenda

Middle class activists sought to be modern but their own social positions also meant that they would use the resources of tradition to construct that modernity This was not simply the product of being a colonized people though colonialism undoubtedly inflected their modernity Looked upon from the perspective of an ideal typical modernity the politics of the middle class of colonial Lucknow would be found wanting It was not egalitarian enough to perceive the lower social orders as equal citizens It was not liberal enough to allow even women from its own class equality within the home It was not secular enough to keep away from Hindu nationalist imaginings of the nation Why did this happen to a class that so consciously modelled itself on the model of a progressive egalitarian liberal secular middle class? The answer the conclusion to this book suggests does not lie in India s incomplete transition to modernity whether accounted for by primordial attachments to pre modern beliefs or indeed by mutations necessitated by colonialism Instead a comparison with European as well as other non western histories reveals that a modernity which is strictly rational secular egalitarian and free of traces of superstition sentiment or prejudice exists only in the realms of an ideal type Like elsewhere in the world including the West middle class modernity in colonial India was built upon an existing set of ideas which it transformed to include elements of both authoritarianism and liberalism emancipation and hierarchy An exploration of this fractured modernity is the central theme of this book

ONE

Creating a Public Emergence of a Middle Class in Colonial Lucknow

This chapter examines the processes by which men with little more than educational or professional qualifications and/or literary ability were able to dictate new norms of social and cultural conduct and initiate modes of modern politics in colonial India which ultimately made them the political heirs of the Raj In short it examines the rise of a new political, social and cultural phenomenon in India the middle class Taking the city of Lucknow as a case study the chapter traces ways in which an educated elite came to represent itself as an Indian middle class It examines the changes in the social and intellectual life of this group as it confronted new social pressures and took advantage of the opportunities presented to it under British rule It reveals how these men used their literary training and talents to the fullest in carving out a public sphere through publishing journalism and through the creation of new civic associations The chapter argues that it was these interventions rather than their social and economic position in Lucknow society which made them a middle class distinct from the aristocratic nawabs and the taluqdars, and also the lower orders of society

An eminent member of the Lucknavi middle class of the late nineteenth century recognized the changes occurring around him and celebrated the way in which modern institutions constituting a public in Lucknow were emancipating people from the thraldom of the past' (Dar 1921 185–6) A close examination of middle class politics and rhetoric however, also makes it evident that the emancipation was far from complete For one just as the bourgeois public sphere in western Europe excluded more groups than it actually represented (Eley 1993) the public sphere created by the Indian middle class worked mainly towards its own empowerment Even at other levels, the emancipation from burdens of history was far from complete Middle class politics created a new and modern idiom of politics in colonial Lucknow and activists used

these modern ideas to successfully marginalize the older elites of the city At the same time the same middle class also deployed older more traditional prejudices in the public sphere to exclude lower caste and class groups from participation in the realm it called the public Thus not only were other social groups excluded from the public sphere but the very ideas and institutions that created the middle class were thus tempered and constituted by ideas and prejudices we normally do not associate with an ideal typical modernity

This chapter traces the rise of the middle class by focusing on the emergence of a public sphere in colonial Lucknow It traces the ways in which social change accompanying British rule in Lucknow allowed a group of relatively insignificant men primarily though not exclusively from family background in the service gentry to emerge as the arbiters of social political and cultural conduct in colonial Lucknow Relatively insignificant of course does not imply that these were men without any importance in the old order As administrators literary figures or merely as part of a recognizably respectable class upper caste Hindu or Ashraf Muslim men already had high status in nawabi society This chapter shows how using new institutions of the public sphere these men were able to transform ideas of respectability while constituting themselves as a middle class Apart from institutions like newspapers civic associations or public meetings the chapter pays close attention to the nature of the public which middle class activists were constructing through their activities Examining the boundaries of the public the middle class constructed reveals important constitutive tensions in its imagination Whereas middle class activists borrowed heavily from western Enlightenment ideas as they sought to marginalize the traditional elites of the city their exclusion of lower classes was based on much more traditional hierarchies Such contradictions this chapter argues were inevitable in the constitution of the middle class and both enabled as well as limited its agenda.

SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE EMERGENCE OF A MIDDLE CLASS

Perhaps in reaction to the early colonial and more recently the post colonial contention that the Indian middle class was simply a product of colonialism, we now have the proposition that the colonial middle class was not significantly different from the eighteenth century ecumene Christopher Bayly did Indian history yeoman service in tracing the history of the service gentry from the late seventeenth through to the middle of the nineteenth century (C Bayly 1983) He has gone further

to explore how the literary and political activities of the service gentry composed of court officials poets scribes religious leaders and some times merchants created an Indian ecumene which debated social and political matters among themselves and on occasion were critical of the workings of the state (C Bayly 1996) An underlying theme in both these studies and his latest work (C Bayly 1998) has been to trace the pre colonial roots of middle class politics in particular the politics of nationalism The empirical depth of Bayly s scholarship is formidable Yet in light of the evidence from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it is difficult to accept his contention that pre colonial men talities and forms of organization were the active forces in shaping the colonial Indian middle class (C Bayly 1983 195) or that Indian nation alism can indeed be traced back to the workings of the Indian ecumene of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (C Bayly 1996 180–1) There was a qualitative as well as quantitative change in the nature of public 'debates in discussion in the colonial era and it was a change of which participants in these debates were well aware This change was not simply a result of English education or new forms of communica tions though these undoubtedly played a part in the process The change was closely connected with the way the service gentry as well as others who came to see themselves as part of the middle class lived their lives earned their living and perceived their own role in the world around them

Recent historiographic trends which appear to treat Indian society as a *tabula rasa* upon which colonial ideas and institutions wrote their texts of modernity clearly overstate the case Yet there is no doubt that British rule created far reaching changes in the way urban dwellers lived their lives Cities were transformed both in terms of landscape as well as gov ernment The old city of Lucknow for instance, was virtually improved off the face of the earth as the British tore down and rebuilt large parts of the city in keeping with imperatives of safety law and order sanita tion and the economy (Oldenburg 1989 xx and *passim*) At the same time British rule introduced a new civic order in cities The prohibition on the possession of arms after 1857 and a new policing and judicial system spelt an end to the says of street fighting dandies the *bankas* and effectively precluded possibilities of citizens directly settling persona' disputes through the use of force (ibid Premchand 1978 I 5–10 41 Sharar 1989 109–16) With the British also came a novel intrusive gov ernment which sought to direct almost all aspects of urban living from the consumption and sale of intoxicants to the location of burial and cremation grounds from size of latrines to the size of religious processions

(Oldenburg 1989 xx) Life could hardly be the same as it was before for any urban dweller after the advent of British rule in north India

Kin connections had played a very important part in getting jobs in the royal courts and bureaucracies (Lelyveld 1978 Sender 1988) So much so that certain families and kin groups even came to monopolize particular kinds of jobs For instance a Kayastha family had a virtual stranglehold on the revenue department of the rulers of Awadh (Fisher 1987) Such arrangements suited the administrative needs of the state and also the families in question Powers of patronage made kin or family connections of crucial importance and put well established kin elders in positions of great power Among the Kashmiri Pandits a diasporic community of Brahmins originally from Kashmir, who served in the royal courts of north India since the eighteenth century this was the role per formed by family elders called *buzurgs* A buzurg was usually an elderly and influential Pandit prepared to devote a significant part of his time and resources towards community activities Younger Pandits or those from other towns would seek the advice of the buzurg sometimes stay in his house and eventually obtain the sort of introductions that would lead to employment Needless to say therefore the buzurg was a pivot of the community whose household acted as a centre for ritual as well as secular community activities (Sender 1988)

Administrative changes accompanying colonial rule particularly a change in rules governing recruitment had ramifications well beyond the sphere of employment [1] British efforts to check what they perceived as nepotism and kin and caste cliques in the bureaucracy ultimately undermined the basis of the power of Kashmiri buzurgs and similar kin or clan elders as the nodal points of community life New pressures and new opportunities ultimately made drastic changes to the circumstances under which large sections of the service families lived their lives Quite apart from seeking other sources of employment such changes also allowed for new patterns of social behaviour and the emergence of new solidarities

For members of service families to get employment under the British, training in western style institutes of education became almost compul

[1] In 1877 educational requirements were introduced as an absolute preliminary condition to the appointment of any candidate to an office with a salary of Rs 10 and upwards NWP&O GAD Proceedings February 1885 no 1 (cited in Sender 1988 116) These qualifications were introduced piecemeal and were relaxed in some cases Powers of patronage did con tinue n the British *kachari* milieu till late in the nineteenth century and to some extent beyond (Lelyveld 1978) However such powers were certainly circumscribed considerably as nepotism became a term of censure if not condemnation in British recruitment policy

sory This was so not only for government jobs but also for pursuing any of the newer avenues of employment that opened up in colonial north India To practise in the law courts to teach in schools or colleges and in most cases even to practise journalism required some formal schooling The service classes were particularly well suited to adapt to this situation The service gentry whose evolution Bayly describes from the late seventeenth century was a mobile one Service professionals often moved considerable distances in search of better opportunities Service in different royal courts under different rulers meant that there was a tradition of adaptation among such families No one better exemplified this tradition than the Kayasthas and Kashmiri Pandits of north India Serving under Muslim rulers not only did many of them become proficient in Persian but even adapted many aspects of the lifestyles of these courts (Sender 1988 Sharar 1989) No wonder that members of the service classes flocked to the new schools and colleges set up by missionaries the state or by Indian philanthropists A report by the education department of the government showed that more than 65 per cent of the students in Lucknow s Canning College came from service backgrounds (*RPEO* 1874–5) As early as 1871 government reports noticed the popularity of English as a subject among students in Lucknow s schools and in 1885 acknowledged the almost unlimited demand for English tuition that appears to exist among the people of Lucknow (*RPEO* 1871–2 *RPI* 1884–5)

That the interest in learning English and pursuing college degrees was closely tied to the decline of traditional patronage networks was made obvious by a Kashmiri Pandit spokesman exhorting his caste fellows to take to higher education in 1891 Speaking to Lucknow s Pandits Bishan Narain Dar said that the times when even the stones in Kashmiri Muhalla [the Kashmiri neighborhood] could boast they had an uncle who is Deputy Commissioner had passed Highlighting the fact that the Pandits no longer had monopoly over government positions Dar said it was time for them to take their education seriously if they wanted to compete with other communities for scarce opportunities (Sender 1989 135) Even the Deputy Commissioner–uncles were coming to the same realization Philanthropic activities particularly among service communities changed significantly in the latter part of the nineteenth century Whereas earlier feasts at Kashmiri buzurg s houses or marriage festivities involved huge expenses with invitation being extended to the whole community increasingly there were calls for curbs on such wasteful expenditure (Sender 1988 *INSC* 1890–1916) Instead many well to do professionals government servants or

community activists spent their money in establishing schools colleges scholarships libraries and boarding houses for their less fortunate brethren [2]

Examination of the extent of the impact of western education in producing the Indian middle class has often been limited to examining the content of the new education British administrators congratulated themselves on the emancipation of thought that their curriculum had introduced though they did worry about the extent to which such ideas contributed to the lack of discipline and a growing irreverence amongst the educated Indians [3] In more recent scholarship the content of British education has been reinterpreted as a means of facilitating conquest and its effects one of producing perceptions of oppression rather than emancipation (Viswanathan 1989 S Chandra 1992) Yet what is more often overlooked is the extent to which western education also provided a new basis of solidarity among the educated It is not simply the question of a generation sharing new ideas or of having a new vocabulary to articulate them, though these were undoubtedly important What is also significant is the extent to which the experience of this education created conditions for a new basis of identification among its products In the days before the British education had been conducted much less formally through community schools or via personal tutors (*RPEO* 1874–5 Appendix I) The experience of collective education at the new institutions of learning was quite different and bred a new solidarity based partly on ideas but also institutional loyalties The *esprit de corps* of the first generation from the college in Aligarh for instance has been well documented (Lelyveld 1978) Even more significant perhaps is the sense of moral and not just intellectual superiority that marked the products of the new educational system (Krishna Kumar 1991) This sense of moral superiority which combined earlier notions of privilege with new ideas including utilitarianism and Spencerian social evolutionism was one of the ways in which educated men of the nineteenth century were different from their forebears

[2] Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's project to set up a Muslim college is well known (Lelyveld 1978) Munshi Kali Prasad a wealthy Kayastha endowed a Kayastha school (and a Kayastha newspaper) in his will (Carroll 1975) Lala Kalicharan a Khatri also left money to start a Khatri school (NWP&O Education Proceedings July 1912 43 file 2 of 1912 (UPSA)) Newal Kishore a successful publisher, contributed to many educational establishments as well (*Uttar Pradesh Munshi Newal Kishore par Vishesh Samagri* February 1981)

[3] NWP&O Education, file 203 of 1888 A P MacDonnell Secretary Government of India Home Department to the Secretary to the Government NWP&O 31 December 1887 (UPSA)

Given that adaptability had been one of the hallmarks of the service classes perhaps new ideas or institutions alone are not enough to conclusively establish the difference between the educated men of the late nineteenth century and their ancestors One factor which really established this distinction however was the means they used to express the new ideas The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw an amazing proliferation of civic associations and newspapers sponsored most often by men educated in the new institutions The associations and papers included those forwarding caste and community interests but also ones engaging a range of secular issues The emergence of caste associations with leaders from communities like the Kayasthas (1873/1887) and Kashmiri Pandits (1887) among the first to form such associations in northern India were a direct result of the sort of social changes happening at the time (Carroll 1975 1977 Sender 1988) The associations emerged at a time when traditional communitarian patterns of authority such as those of the Kashmiri *buzurgs* were in decline and worked to further undermine such hierarchies The new Kashmiri associations and their publications (such as the *Murasla i Kashmir* established in 1872) were initially deferential towards the established leadership of *buzurgs* Within a few years however issues of general concern to the community were being discussed and decided by younger educated men through papers like the *Murasla* the *Safir i Kashmir* and organizations such as the Kashmiri Young Men s Association effectively marginalizing the older elite (Sender 1988 Zutshi 1900)

Nor did these public men limit themselves only to community associations As much as they were obliged to improve the situation of their less enlightened caste or community brethren the values imbibed from their new education also compelled the new educated men to contribute to the moral upliftment of Indian society as a whole To this end a great many societies associations and debating clubs were established not just in north India but over much of the country[4] In Lucknow one of the first such associations was the *Jalsa i Tahzib* established in 1868 Literally translating as Assembly of the Civilized the Jalsa was referred to as the Lucknow Reform Club in reports of the administration Run by Kashmiri Pandits Kayasthas and Ashraf Muslims of the city the Jalsa

[4] For a list of such ssociations clubs, and societies in the North western Province see Robinson 1993 87 The most famous of such associations outside of northern India around the same time were the Indian Association of Calcutta established in 1876 the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha of 1870 the Deccan Education Society 1884 the Bombay Presidency Association of 1885 the Triplicane Literary Society the Madras Mahajan Sabha and of course the Indian National Congress founded in 1885

was in fact given a great deal of support by the administration who regarded it as an organization through which public opinion may be readily ascertained (*RPEO* 1872–3 176) The Jalsa subscribed to books and newspapers and its members discussed subjects related to education and social reform Munshi Newal Kishore who was to become one of the most famous publishers of the country began an Urdu newspaper in Lucknow the *Oudh Akhbar* as early as 1858 This too was well patronized by the government which picked up a significant percentage of its print run as subscriptions for schools and colleges

The Jalsa and the *Oudh Akhbar* represented in some ways the first move of the educated men to find a voice for their concerns in a city like Lucknow They were given a great deal of support by the administration and in turn were never overtly critical of British rule In fact people running organizations like the Jalsa and for a long time the *Oudh Akhbar* too were convinced of the purely beneficial impact of British rule Ratan Nath Sarshar, who was editor of the *Oudh Akhbar* between 1878 and 1893 was for instance a great believer in the benefits of western education and British rule (Russell 1992, Mookerjee 1992) Much of Newal Kishore s fortune was built on maintaining good relations with the administration and in his later years he took an active part in combating what he perceived as the seditious potential in the activities of the Indian National Congress (*SVN* 12 October 1898 539) Yet, organizations like the Jalsa confined as they were to discussing matters of social reform and the like did not quite satisfy the appetite that educated men were developing as they came to style themselves the representatives of public opinion in colonial north India It is revealing that within a decade the Jalsa was superseded by another association led by the educated men of Lucknow This organization was significantly named the *Rifah i Am Association* literally translating as The Association for *Public* Welfare The Rifah soon became the centre of political activity in the city As early as the 1880s *Rifah* was sending memorials requesting repeal of legislation inimical to the interests of the people, and in 1890 sent a letter to the Government of India, representing all classes of the native community in the City' and objecting to proposed legislation which would adversely affect the interests of the people of Oudh [5]

Given the sort of changes in lifestyles training and attitudes among the service classes it is difficult to accept the notion that pre colonial mentalities and forms of organization continued to inform their out

[5] Representation from the Rifa i Aum Association to S Harvey James Secretary to Government of India, Legislative — dated 10 September 1890 BIA Papers, no 52 (NMML)

look into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries From being depend ent on well placed *raises* (big men literally rich) and buzurgs more and more members from such communities found that they could and more significantly came to believe that they should play a more active role in the way society and government was organized Along with caste or com munity associations they began to find forums to articulate their ideas about social change in newspapers reform societies and other civic as sociations Within the space of a decade or so many of these educated men sought a larger stage for their activities Increasingly they wanted to be seen not simply as the representatives of advanced opinion in India or as the bearers of new light (see Russell 1992) but as representatives of *public* opinion

THE EMERGENCE OF A PUBLIC SPHERE

Jurgen Habermas was one of the first scholars to historicize the emer gence of the public as a category in political life (Habermas 1989) Trac ing the origins of this public sphere—where groups of private citizens can rationally discuss and comment upon public life—to developments in the history of western Europe Habermas showed how social and eco nomic developments from the European High Middle Ages contributed to the making of a bourgeois public sphere in the eighteenth century It is this history Habermas argues which allows for the emergence (and the later transformation and degeneration) of a liberal public sphere where educated people could discuss and comment upon matters of general interest and represent these as public opinion This public sphere has been described as a sphere which mediates between society and state in which the public organizes itself as the bearer of public opinion (Eley 1993 290)

Given Habermas s rather forbidding injunction that his analysis of the public sphere should not be abstracted from European history and ap plied to other historical situations even when they appear similar (Habermas 1989 xvii), it appears foolhardy to try and extend the notion of the public sphere to colonial India Scholarly opinion seems to concur Introducing a set of essays on the public sphere in colonial India Sandria Freitag presumes that the public sphere would necessarily be different in an imperial setting compared to a nation that rules itself (Freitag 1991 2) Aspects of the history of colonial India too appear to bear this out For one we see the apparently paradoxical situation where the state or some of its institutions appear to be promoting the idea of public ness Clearly this is a situation which is quite distinct from the one Habermas

describes where the defining characteristic of the bourgeois public sphere is its autonomy from institutions of the state Notions of public welfare and the language of public ness appear to be deployed to further the interests of the colonial state in India To take just one example seven major *awqaf* (Muslim trusts) set up by the erstwhile rulers of Awadh were taken over by the state in 1868 on the grounds that these were public bequests and needed the protection of the state (Oldenburg 1989 198–9) In the aftermath of the unexpectedly widespread support for the rebels of 1857 the colonial state was equally keen to monitor public opinion This as much as any attempts to civilize the natives can probably explain the assistance offered by the administration to organizations like the *Jalsa i Tahzib* in Lucknow

The colonial presence in the public sphere leads Partha Chatterjee to argue that even as late as the 1880s the only public sphere that existed in colonial India consisted of European residents of the country Their opinion counted as public opinion and the question of the appropriate relationship between government and the public came to be defined primarily around the freedoms of the British Indian press (Chatterjee 1993 22) Educated Indians even while contesting colonial difference in the public sphere located their own project of counter hegemony in a spiritual or inner domain over which they claimed sovereignty says Chatterjee To understand the (counter) hegemonic aspirations of the Indian elite under colonialism Chatterjee therefore focuses on the constructions and contestations within this inner domain Sandria Freitag in an analogous move prefers to direct her attention towards urban public rituals and ceremonial activities where she argues an alternative Indian public sphere was created (Freitag 1989a 1996) There is no doubt that notions about public ness emerged through a very different process in colonial India as compared to eighteenth century western Europe That however seems little reason to completely ignore what evidently was the most important arena of activity for Indian political and social activists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries namely their activities in the arenas they created in attempts to replicate the bourgeois public sphere

In complete contrast to Chatterjee and Freitag (and Habermas one may add!) Christopher Bayly suggests that public opinion—the weight of reasoned debate—was not the preserve of modern or western politics Tracing a much longer indigenous genealogy for the public sphere activities of the later nineteenth century activists Bayly suggests that these men drew upon a tradition of debate persuasion and communication which owed as much to Indian norms as they did to Comte or

Mazzini (C Bayly 1996 181) The north Indian ecumene he points out had long functioned as a critical reasoning public with the literati or officials using poetry satire letter writing placarding festivals and religious congregations to exercise a degree of critical surveillance on the activities of the state Bayly s argument is a useful corrective to the common assumption that all aspects of modernity indeed politics itself it sometimes seems comes to South Asia with colonialism. While accepting his argument about certain parallels between the activities and personnel of what he terms the ecumene and the colonial public sphere it would be a mistake to take these at face value The political economy which supported the creation of a public sphere in colonial Lucknow as well as the political ideology which underpinned it were completely different from that of the ecumene which Bayly describes Criticism of the Emperor s poetry might have been allowed within the confines of a *mushaira* (poetic gathering) in Delhi Local clergy or gentry in Awadh may on occasion have evoked moral or scriptural authority to publicly criticize and even mobilize opinion against unpopular official decisions But just because some satirists (and only those with royal favour at that) were granted the *licence* to exercise criticism does not mean that others and certainly others in less privileged circumstances could demand that as a right Criticism of political authority by representatives of civil society by a theoretically unlimited public was not enshrined as a right in the ideological template of pre colonial north India

There appear to be implied notions of authenticity in the debates about the public sphere in colonial India For Chatterjee and Freitag notions of the public introduced by the British appear contaminated and hence real and authentically Indian politics is located elsewhere in the uncolonized inner domain for Chatterjee and in public ceremonial rituals for Freitag Bayly on the other hand suggests that colonialism hardly mattered at all There was already an authentically Indian tradition of debate and discussion and the activists of the later nineteenth century merely used new tools including the press to carry on much in the same way as they had since the eighteenth century What both positions fail to acknowledge is a more dynamic model of social and cultural change By the late nineteenth century and earlier in some areas of India imperialism had made available a new idea of public ness Colonial administrators may well have begun to deploy notions of public ness drawn from their own history in an effort to serve their own purposes But by the late nineteenth century this idea like many others was successfully appropriated by Indians to forward their own agenda That this notion of public ness did indeed draw upon the history of the colonists did not

preclude it from becoming as much a part of the culture of Indian politics as the debates of the ecumene The foreign origins of these ideas moreover did not prevent them from reaching out to shape in significant ways the political rituals of urban civic arenas or indeed in politics in the inner domains (Haynes 1991)

Examining the history of newspapers—the quintessential sign of the public sphere—in northern India can help better contextualize arguments about the colonial public sphere Newspapers *akhbarat* had existed before the British Written by *akhbar navis* (news writers) who were employed by royal courts merchants or other rich and powerful individuals these were none the less confidential mostly manuscript documents intended for limited circulation (Fisher 1993) These could be interpreted as analogous to developments in fourteenth and fifteenth century Europe where merchant newsletters created the basis upon which the bourgeois public sphere of the later centuries would be built (Habermas 1989 16) But there is little evidence from this time that these private newsletters had the potential to become public news On the contrary though there were printing presses available in the Indian kingdoms free dissemination of information was positively discouraged For instance the Nawab of Awadh once closed down all printing presses by royal fiat The owners of the presses had been worried even about moving their equipment to nearby British Kanpur as they feared that their presses might be confiscated by state officials on the way (N A Khan 1991 296)

Public newspapers existing as a commodity which at least theoretically anyone could buy and read were introduced under British rule Initially catering largely for the official and non official British population living in the Presidency towns of Calcutta Madras and Bombay newspapers had been in existence in British controlled India at least since the late eighteenth century At the same time there is also abundant evidence that Indians were quick to emulate their example By the middle of the nineteenth century the number of native newspapers and their effective readership were considered sufficiently significant even in the territories most recently acquired by the British for the government to regard them as an important factor contributing to the rebellion of 1857 (Natarajan 1955)

Awadh was the last province to be forcibly annexed to the British empire Within a year of its annexation and the massive revolt of 1857 the *Oudh Akhbar* the first daily vernacular newspaper of the province began publication from Lucknow This newspaper was brought out by the press of Munshi Newal Kishore who migrated to Lucknow soon after

the revolt of 1857 (*Uttar Pradesh* February 1981) By the last quarter of the nineteenth century there was a profusion of Indian run newspapers and magazines in Lucknow with tremendous variety in their content size agenda frequency and language making the city a major centre of publishing in north India (*MIN* 1890–1920) Whatever their origin at least one section of the Indian population soon made newspapers the vehicles to secure for themselves a larger place in the social and political milieu of the colonial world

The Indians involved with the production of the newspapers were for most part the same as the ones in the new associations and societies that is men with some exposure to western education, and for most part belonging to service communities For some of them editing or writing in newspapers was a way of making a living With the growing number of papers in the market this became yet another profession for men with some education literary talent and an interest in the world around them For others journalism, writing in or even publishing newspapers became a way of forwarding important causes Some such publicists looked for richer patrons to subsidize their ventures before their products could attract enough subscriptions to keep the enterprises afloat Others put time and money from other regular jobs into keeping their public enterprises afloat Whether acting as professional journalists or dedicated publicists for causes newspapers certainly empowered these men in ways which even service in royal courts had not done for their ancestors

Nowhere was the power of this group more evident than in colonial Lucknow Traditionally the stronghold of nawabi power, even by the end of the nineteenth century there were rich and influential members of the former ruler s family present in the city though by now they were a force in decline (Premchand 1987 Sharar 1989 Hill 1991 Oldenburg 1991) After the Revolt of 1857 the British made a conscious attempt to introduce large rural landowners the taluqdars as the new natural rulers in the city (Reeves 1991 TR Metcalf 1979 Hosain 1987) Yet by the close of the nineteenth century neither nawabi descendants nor even the taluqdars played pivotal roles in social political and cultural developments in the city Rather it was men like Newal Kishore the publisher novelists and journalists like Ratan Nath Sarshar politicians and newspaper publishers and editors such as Ganga Prasad Varma Sajjad Hussain or Abdul Halim Sharar who were playing increasingly prominent roles in the city Even the voices of the champions of Hindi in a primarily Urdu dominated city of men like Shivanath Sharma Rupnarayan Pandey or Dularelal Bhargava were being heard in colonial Lucknow All this happened because of their active role in the emerging

public sphere composed of newspapers journals associations and socie ties

The most prominent example of the potential for success that com mercial printing brought about was Munshi Newal Kishore Starting as a printer s apprentice in Lahore Newal Kishore managed to turn his press in Lucknow into one of the largest and most successful enterprises in Asia Books from his press reached almost all government schools and colleges in northern India and others as far as Central Asia and the Arabic reading world Newal Kishore died in 1895, as one of the richest men in the province (*Uttar Pradesh* February 1981) Though believing more in personal contacts with the administration than in public pol itics Newal Kishore certainly participated in the politics of the emerging public sphere He was a leading figure of the movement opposing the Indian National Congress (INC) in Lucknow with his *Oudh Akhbar* at the forefront of his campaigns He attended public meetings hostile to the Congress and even hosted Anti National Congress meetings at his Hazratganj residence (SVN 12 May 1890 289)

Newal Kishore was the owner and publisher of the *Oudh Akhbar* but his longest serving editor was a Kashmiri Pandit Ratan Nath Sarshar Born in 1846 in Lucknow Sarshar came from a relatively underprivileged Pandit family Yet he was able to use his literary skills to become an import ant public figure in late nineteenth century Lucknow As editor of the best known Urdu paper in northern India, and then as the author of *Fasana i Azad* arguably the first Urdu novel Sarshar s ideas were widely read and discussed among the educated men of colonial Lucknow (Rais 1991 Mookerjee 1992) Abdul Halim Sharar was born in 1860 His father was a ranking member of the court of the last ruler of Awadh but in changed circumstances it was Sharar s prolific literary output and his activities as publisher and editor of a variety of social, literary, and religious journals that brought him fame a degree of fortune and certainly a prominent position in his time (Jain 1979 10–12 Sharar 1989 17–26) The same may be said for Munshi Sajjad Hussain Born in 1856 into a typical ser vice gentry household, Sajjad s father was a Deputy Collector and his uncle an important lawyer of Lucknow Yet Sajjad s fame came from his publishing and editing the *Oudh Punch* Founded in 1877 in Lucknow the journal successfully blended older traditions of written satire with demands of modern journalism to produce the first journal devoted to political satire and humour in north India Through this Sajjad lampooned the mod ernists and reformers in particular Sir Saiyyid Ahmad Khan and his supporters like Newal Kishore and also supported the Congress party which he joined in 1887 (*MIN* 1890 *DNB* IV 24 Jain 1979 128–9)

Ganga Prasad Varma born in 1863 also came from a Khatri service family As a founding member of the Congress politically ambitious Varma began to edit and publish the *Advocate* an English language bi weekly paper in Lucknow and followed it with the *Hindustani* in Urdu Both papers were obvious supporters of the Congress and certainly helped Varma s rise in public life where he ended up as the Vice Chairman of the Municipal Board of Lucknow and also of the provincial committee of the Congress party (*DNB* IV 408) Writing in the *Advocate* and the *Hindustani* also brought public recognition to another supporter of the Congress in Lucknow Bishan Narain Dar Dar born in 1864 came from a well connected Kashmiri Pandit family his father was a Munsif (a high position for an Indian at that time) in government service and his grand father had been an akhbar navis (writer and reader of news) in the court of the exiled Wajid Ali Shah in Matiya Burj Dar wrote extensively on social and political subjects and was elected Congress President in 1911

The champions of Hindi in colonial Lucknow did not share the same social background Most of them were Brahmins of north India and not from traditional service backgrounds Yet in other respects men like Shivanath Sharma (b 1867) the publisher and editor of *Anand* Dularelal Bhargava (b 1895) and Rupnarayan Pandey the editors of *Madhuri* and co publishers and editors of *Sudha* were not very different from their counterparts in Urdu journalism (Suman 1981 255–8 504–5 576–7) Almost all these men were products of the new educational system Sarshar attended the school attached to Canning College and though far from a model student did have sufficient familiarity with European literature to draw upon Cervantes as inspiration for his *Fasana i Azad* and later even undertake a translation of *Don Quixote* from English into Urdu (Rais 1991) Sajjad Hussain Ganga Prasad Varma Bishan Narain Dar and Shivanath Sharma all graduated with degrees from Canning College in Lucknow and in his reminiscences Rupnarayan Pandey mentioned a professor of the college as a major influence in his life Also all of them were men who needed to work for a living Sharar was the assistant editor of *Oudh Akhbar* for a while and later took up a job as tutor–companion to the son of a Hyderabad nobleman and even ac companied him to England for a while Bishan Narain Dar was a lawyer a barrister who trained in England Shivanath Sharma supported him self as a teacher at a high school in Lucknow Dularelal Bhargava worked at the Newal Kishore Press (*DNB* IV 24 408 *DNB* I 331 Suman 1981 576 Jain 1979 11) and Rupnarayan Pandey did translations to earn money

In part it was the technology and economics of publishing which

allowed men of limited means to participate in the public sphere Setting up a small newspaper press was not too expensive In the 1860s the Methodist Publishing House acquired its first hand operated press for only 500 rupees (Hollister 1961) Even twenty or thirty years later it was possible for men of fairly limited means to establish their own presses and papers Shivanath Sharma the high school teacher was a crusader for the promotion of Hindi and the Devnagari script in Lucknow Initially he edited the Hindi journal *Vasundhara* owned by Jwalaprasad Sharma Probably owing to financial difficulties the *Vasundhara* ceased publication in 1904 The journal reappeared in 1905 still owned by Jwalaprasad but now published from the Shri Damodar Press owned by Shivanath Sharma himself (*SNP* 1903 1904 1905) This was the press he used to publish his later journals such as the *Anand* Even Sharar also a man of limited financial means found enough resources to open his own Dilgudaz Press to print the many journals he published in Lucknow (See *MIN* 1890 *SNP* 1903 1904 1905 1916 1917) These small presses were obviously completely different in character (whether at the level of technology number of print orders employees and most significantly profit levels) from the massive printing works of a Newal Kishore whose presses were said to employ hundreds of workers (*Uttar Pradesh* February 1981) Like the bigger commercial enterprises however the smaller presses probably kept out of red by taking in job work—the printing of textbooks government forms etc In fact such print orders appear to have been the main sources of profit for any publishing house in the nineteenth or early twentieth century Newal Kishore certainly depended upon government publishing contracts to keep his vast enterprise financially viable Even a missionary enterprise such as the Methodist Publishing House of Lucknow took in job work as the only means of keeping itself financially solvent (Hollister 1961)

In terms of absolute number of copies printed and sold the newspapers and journals of NWP&O had small circulations Early Urdu dailies like the *Oudh Akhbar* were only published in the hundreds in the 1880s and even later more successful papers like the *Saiyara* sold only about 5500 copies per issue making it the highest selling Urdu paper in 1914 (*MIN* 1914) But subscription or circulation figures seldom reflected actual readership The newer public institutions such as the Jalsa i Tahzib or the Rifah i Am maintained libraries and reading rooms where books newspapers and journals were available to the interested reader Over 1872–3 for instance the Jalsa library subscribed to 25 Urdu newspapers and 9 magazines and circulated these through 5 709 readers An official report about the Jalsa expressed great satisfaction in noting the

incessant and pressing requests from members for Newspapers There is no doubt that the Jalsah has accomplished one important task that of creating a healthy taste for Newspaper reading and of fostering an interest in what is going on in the world (*RPEO* 1872–3 177) At the same time in a culture where oral tradition remained important newspapers were read out to groups of people by a literate person thus increasing the r reach without this being reflected in circulation figures (C Bayly 1996 240)

People involved in the new public sphere were well aware of the novelty of what they were doing and indeed of the model they were emulating as they set about to act as representatives of a public opinion The novelty of the category is evident in that writers of the late nineteenth century often transliterated the English word public directly into their Urdu prose Altaf Hussain Hali the biographer of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and a major Urdu poet in his own right used the English phrase public speaking to describe a new oratorical style adopted by Sir Sayyid while addressing meetings to raise money for the Aligarh College (Lelyveld n d) That they were using the term public with full knowledge of its European ancestry is evidenced for instance by the fact that Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan s paper the *Tahzib ul Akhlaq* was explicitly modelled on the eighteenth century coffee house journals like *The Spectator* and *The Tatler* (Lelyveld n d) Sharar too wanted to emulate the prose style of Addison in his public writing as he himself stated in his first Urdu magazine the *Mahshar* (Sharar 1989 18) Similarly Sir Sayyid too was explicit that he wanted to do for India what Steele and Addison did in their days to England though he was becoming increasingly frustrated by the lack of appreciation and outright criticism that his views met with in India (Sayyid Ahmad Khan cited in Lelyveld n d)

Despite Chatterjee s claim the derivative nature of their politics never seemed to direct public sphere activists of northern India towards withdrawal into an inner domain of spirituality On the contrary they brought questions of religion and spirituality firmly into this domain (see Chapter Three below) In an essay titled The Formation and Expression [of] Opinion in India Bishan Narain Dar traced the evolution of the public spirit in India Though he was far from an unabashed admirer of British rule Dar admitted it was the British who created circumstances favourable to the growth of a sound and enlightened public opinion The high value that Dar placed on public opinion (as well as his grounding in Eurocentric history!) is evident from the historical examples he cites in that essay The greatness of ancient Greece Dar asserted lay in the fact that t had allowed pub' c debate and free discussion on important

issues By encouraging modern learning and allowing freedom to express these ideas the British allowed Indians to liberalise the mind and emancipate it from the thraldom of the past (Dar 1921 185–6) The public sphere—composed of newspapers and formal associations relatively free from older networks of authority based on age wealth or past prestige—certainly emancipated that section of north Indian society to which Dar and many of his compatriots belonged from the thraldom of the past

The power that these men could exercise through the public sphere was very real and underscores the sort of changes that had occurred under colonial rule Once soon after taking over as nawab from his father Safdar Jang in 1754 Shuja ud daula ordered the abduction of an unmarried Khatri woman of Ayodhya for a night of forced intimacy While the Khatris of Ayodhya were outraged their response was not (and could not be) one which provoked a confrontation with the nawab s authority Rather the Ayodhya Khatris deployed caste and kin alliances to seek the intervention of another Khatri who was highly placed in the nawab s court This man in turn approached the Chief Minister for justice A complicated series of manoeuvres and negotiations followed the upshot of which was that a chastised Shuja was made to realize the limitations of his authority (Barnett 1980 44–5) Perceptions of injustice and all signs of inequity between rulers and ruled met with very different responses by the latter part of the nineteenth century Even apparently trivial issues of whether or not Indians were to take off their footwear while entering a British court or more serious matters such as the reportedly accidental shooting of Indians by British soldiers were met with loud and sustained protests by Indian newspapers civic associations and political parties (See for instance *SVN* 21 December 1882 873 21 November 1883 939–40 14 May 1886 361–2 25 December 1894 647)

Despite the limited circulation of the newspapers and although almost all the editors of papers and the leaders of public associations were from among the college educated section of the population they spoke and wrote as the representatives of a much larger public Thus the Indian National Congress or the *Hindustani* or the *Oudh Punch* used the language of liberal representative politics to challenge inequalities between natives and Europeans in colonial Lucknow They did so by highlighting cases of racial abuse or the miscarriage of justice that a native public suffered at the hands of their European rulers Queen Victoria s proclamation guaranteeing equal rights to her Indian subjects was invoked to demand greater equality in dealings between Europeans and

natives At the same time administrative policies and the conduct of individual officers were scrutinized for the extent to which they forwarded or undermined public interest The annual budget for instance was always a matter which provoked comment as did the publication of the annual reports of the administration Accompanying the emergence of the public sphere then was a new and very different notion of political sovereignty which was captured very well by Bishan Narain Dar in one of his essays Contrasting the former rulers of India with the British Dar wrote

> The Mehomedan ruler was unapproachable placed beyond the reach of mortal man hedged around with Divinity men in surrendering themselves to the King believed—and it is impossible to realise the intensity of this belief *in these days of democratic levelling*—that they were paying homage not to an ordinary man but to one who ruled by divine right The English Government is obeyed with a different feeling We feel that *the English are no more than men* (Dar 1921 68–9 emphasis added)

Far from retreating from the public domain then such men welcomed the chance to participate in the public sphere indeed they did so with a missionary zeal In his first editorial as editor of the *Oudh Akhbar* Ratan Nath Sarshar outlined apparently in florid and Persianized Urdu what he felt were the responsibilities of an editor It was an editor s responsibility Sarshar wrote to deliver his fellow countrymen from the depths of the highway of misfortune on to the highway of prosperity By teaching his compatriots to improve their ways the editor was to illuminate with the radiance of the sun of refinement those who languish in the pitch darkness of ignorance begging for light' and also to bring the views of the subject to the notice of the government (Mookerjee 1992 58) Taking this moral high ground almost all newspapers whether they were sympathetic to the administration or critical of official policies claimed to represent a public Even criticism of the administration they claimed was a part of their responsibility as the representatives of native opinion to the government In 1898 when the government was proposing a bill to impose harsher penalties on newspapers charged with spreading sedition the *Hindustani* argued that it was serving both the country and the government by freely expressing its opinion on all matters (SVN 19 January 1898 36) Government officials it argued encouraged sycophants and thus had no access to the true state of native feelings on issues (SVN 26 January 1898 50) By restricting the freedom of the press the paper argued the government not only deprived it of a liberty but also prevented it from performing an important service for

the public and for the government Even those who contested the *Hindustani's* claims also did so using the same terms The *Oudh Akhbar* claimed that the real *public* trusted the Viceroy and the government more than it did the seditious Congress and its organs like the *Hindustani* (*SVN* 6 January 1889)

Politics of the public sphere brought tangible results A memorial from Lucknow residents opposed to the Congress and claiming to represent an important and considerable section of the community was presented to the government in 1899 The memorial bears quoting at length because it captures both the disdain for public sphere politics among a certain class of people yet also the realization of the inevitability of such politics The *Ulamas* Princes *Raises* landowners and their followers and adherents the memorial said had steadfastly held aloof from political propaganda and have only expressed their views on public questions when invited by the Government to do so Yet they now realized that

> it is their duty as loyal citizens [to] no longer sit with folded hands while agitators gain influence over the unthinking masses by monopolizing Government appointments and by getting themselves elected to Municipal Boards the Legislative Councils and other public bodies The people have been wont from time immemorial to regard the ancient aristocracy as their natural leaders but when they see these leaders passed over for scheming ambitious men of the middle classes their respect for authority is undermined and they imbibe the poison of disaffection and discontent The time has therefore come for a somewhat more active participation in public affairs [6]

The princes and raises were probably too late The people whom the petition called the middle classes had effectively occupied much of the political space through their activities in the public sphere Deploying their cultural capital to its fullest advantage this middle class deftly used the public sphere to gain at the expense of those who did not participate in such politics Thus the taluqdars of Awadh, who disdained politics and horse trading for votes (Hosain 1987 256) lost their political clout in the very city where they were supposed to reign as the natural rulers (Reeves 1991) By the last quarter of the nineteenth century men like Dar, Varma or Newal Kishore were playing important and visible roles in the city The writings of Sarshar and Sharar the satires of Sajjad Hussain, or the poetry of another Kashmiri Pandit and lawyer Brij Narain Chakbast were reaching an audience much wider than they could have before the colonial era Newer ideas and opportunities were creating

6 GOI Home Public June 1900 A 303–5 (NAI)

ferment within communities like the Kashmiri Pandits The colonial administration too recognized the growing importance of these men without necessarily approving of their activities Many of them were labelled upstarts or troublemakers The activities of these upstarts however were considered important enough for the state to maintain regular surveillance over them report on their speeches and publications and on occasions even interfere in the nascent electoral processes to ensure that more suitable candidates than the troublemakers were elected to the municipal or provincial assemblies [7]

The public sphere in north India was evidently not the exclusive creation of the colonial state Colonialism certainly provided the circumstances for it to come into being and along with their notions of spreading civilization to the natives no doubt there were also good reasons of political expediency including surveillance of public opinion that had administrators encourage and patronize early public institutions But ultimately it was the appropriation of new ideas and institutions by educated Indians which created a vibrant public sphere in Lucknow much as it did in Surat for instance (Haynes 1991) New institutions such as newspapers and associations allowed educated Indians to take a more prominent role in social and cultural life initially within their own communities and increasingly in the outside world too Certainly their actions do not suggest any inclination to retreat from public politics to an inner domain of spirituality Neither of course does the public sphere politics of the late nineteenth or early twentieth century reveal any substantial continuities with earlier forms of politics practised by the literati What the public sphere does reveal however, is the emergence of an arena where a formerly insignificant social group could become a major player in the social cultural and political world of colonial north India

In 1899 Ratan Nath Sarshar wrote an article describing his visit to the city of Hyderabad In Urdu Sarshar wrote *yahan ke Hindu aur Musalman amra aur public ne meri bari khatir ki* (Mookerjee 1992 4) Translated this simply means I was very well treated here by both Hindus and Muslims the notables as well as the public Sarshar s use of the term public' in an Urdu text reveals the extent to which this was a relatively novel social category or at least one he (like Hali) could not or chose not to describe by any word available in Urdu At the same

[7] For details of official interference in the elections see GOI Home Public August 1893 A 199–204 Also GOI Home Public December 1893 A 118–120 (NAI) Also Hill 1991 142–6 Much of the material I draw upon to make the argument about the public sphere in Lucknow is in fact, drawn from official surveillance of the newspapers and associations

time the fact that he uses the word so casually and without further explanation, implies a certain familiarity on the part of the writer and presumably his audience with the category and the word public But the most interesting part of the description is that he does not contrast the notables the *amra* with any Urdu word that implies the masses or plebeians (such as *aawaam* for instance) but with public Sarshar therefore appears to be suggesting that the public in his imagination has a fairly specific social location which falls below the notables yet is also not quite plebeian the public therefore refers to a social space somewhere in between the two The public Sarshar was describing was not only a new social category but one which men like him and his readers had made their very own around the end of the nineteenth century Despite the claims to represent a larger social body in the imagination of activists like Sarshar the public was effectively composed of literate often western educated men of middle rank In other words the middle class was the public and vice versa

REDEFINING RESPECTABILITY

Habermas saw the bourgeois public sphere emerge as a result of long term social and economic change in Europe These changes included the transition from feudalism to capitalism driven by long distance trade and the innovative efforts of the emerging bourgeoisie to have a larger say in the way social and political life was organized (Habermas 1989) What was not equally explicit in Habermas s work however is the extent to which this sphere was not only a product of bourgeois society but helped to define it That is Habermas does not dwell on the extent to which the public sphere helped create and shape a distinctive middle class identity in Europe Without a public sphere it would not have been possible for men of a middling sort to initiate a new cultural politics to interpose themselves between people of rank and the common people Without looking at public sphere interventions it would be impossible to understand how a shared moral code could make socially and economic disparate groups into a middle class in eighteenth and nineteenth century England (Davidoff and Hall 1991 Wahrman 1995) or indeed how middle class morality their norms of social and political conduct became virtually hegemonic the world over

As in Europe the public sphere played a crucial role in the constitution of the middle class in colonial north India It was through newspapers and public associations they created through their writing in these newspapers journals and novels and what they said at public meetings

and memorials to the government that a group of literate relatively well to do but hitherto politically insignificant group of men came to define a new moral cultural and political code This was a code consciously different from that of the traditional elites and even more important marked them off from the lower orders of society Such public sphere interventions also ultimately allowed for distinctions between themselves and the British rulers Public sphere interventions thus created the Indian middle class Critical to these endeavours creating a middle class were ideas about respectability and self respect As new players in the social political and cultural arenas of colonial north India not only did the middle class have to confront an entrenched indigenous elite they also needed to persuade a new ruling class the British of the merits of their position Beyond a point the British were not too sympathetic to their aspirations Attaining self respect therefore became an important part of the activities of the middle class In the environment they found themselves in, one way of garnering such respect came through redefining notions of respectability

On 20 February 1884 the *Hindustani* of Lucknow complained that graduates were not being appointed to jobs in government service in the North Western Provinces and Oudh (NWP&O) While this was a by now familiar grouse of all organs of the educated men what is significant is the way the paper justified its position Posts of trust and responsibility for which natives are eligible it said need not be entirely reserved for graduates but graduates of good family should be always preferred to those who cannot boast of high education for such appointments *By men of good family we do not mean the sons of the nobility and gentry but those belonging to what are considered as respectable classes of the community from the native point of view* (SVN 27 February 1884 161 emphasis added) In pre colonial Lucknow respectability had more or less been defined by the nobility The traditional elites of Lucknow were the descendants of the courtly nawabs It was the nawabs who had given a particular shape to Lucknow s high culture To acquire a degree of legitimacy the new elites in the city—even landed taluqdars who were implanted as the new nobility by the British—continued to patronize many of the cultural norms and institutions of the nawabi era For a variety of reasons both economic and ideological the new educated men could not subscribe to the same cultural norms or patronize the cultural institutions of the traditional elites The *Hindustani* s attempts at detaching the idea of respectability from the nobility and gentry therefore becomes significant

To redefine respectability middle class activists not only detached respectability from the nobility and gentry but set about systematically

attacking identifiably upper class lifestyles and cultural practices For instance newspapers and associations in Lucknow denigrated the frivolity and sensuousness of the nawabi era condemned the profligacy of the taluqdars and their wasteful expenses on ceremonial and ritual occasions In the place of such decadence they tried to propagate new norms of respectability As editors of newspapers they condemned the people who continued to patronize institutions and pastimes prevalent in nawabi times As proponents of reform within their own communities these activists took the lead in reform movements promoting temperance curtailing wasteful expenses on rituals and marriages cultivating thrift investing in productive business enterprises and in encouraging their communities to seek higher educational qualifications These were the signs of respectability which marked off such activists from social classes above them and it was this redefined respectability which the *Hindustani* referred to when it claimed that by men of good family we do not mean the sons of the nobility and gentry Deliberately criticizing models of behaviour followed by an older elite it was on the basis of transformed norms of respectable behaviour that they claimed positions of trust and responsibility At the same time the fact that it was necessary for the *Hindustani* to clarify the meaning of what a good family meant was indicated that such redefinitions of respectability were far from complete

The frivolities and excesses of traditional social and political elites could well have had a very real role to play in maintaining and reproducing their social order in their own age (see Dirks 1987) For the educated working men however the time and money expended in such pastimes was completely absurd Not only did the educated men denigrate the frivolity sensuousness and degeneracy of the nawabs they in fact sought to restrict most leisure activities which did not serve a didactic or improving purpose Newspapers (and even municipal boards in later years) for instance tried to restrict old pastimes such as kite flying (*SVN* 25 January 1893 39) Singing of bawdy ditties at the Holi festival was condemned (*SVN* 18 March 1883 252) There were even complaints about the new travelling theatre companies which were said to corrupt the morals of people and impoverish the city (*SVN* 31 March 1892 110) Very evidently demonstrating the influence of ideas that came with British rule what these men came to celebrate were the virtues of thrift industry education and the necessity of joining the inevitable march of progress towards reason and enlightenment The Kashmiri Young Men s Club the earliest formal public association among the Pandits of Lucknow was established with a purpose to purify the habits of male

Kashmiris and to discourage Nawabi habits of indulgence and addiction (Sender 1988 172) The hero of Sarshar s novel significantly named Azad (literally independent) preferred to attend improving lectures to dance soirees at the houses of courtesans (Premchand 1987 I 22–5) Kashmiris in Lucknow like other Brahmin Kayastha Khatri and Vaishya caste associations across north India advised their members to curb wasteful expenditure on rituals like marriages and instead invest in education by sponsoring scholarships making boarding houses and even establishing schools (Sender 1988 *INSC* 1890–1916) Instead of wasting money in sensuous pastimes as the nawabs had done improvers and reformers advised their fellows to invest in more productive ways for instance in business enterprises Kashmiri Pandit organizations deliberated about investments in land in trade and of course in education as means of improving the material circumstances of their members Proposals for forming joint stock companies banks and other trading activities were strongly encouraged by Kashmiri community organizations (Sender 1988 164–5) Sarshar s protagonist Azad strongly condemns the man who has two to three hundred thousand rupees buried in the ground Investing that money in business he argues would not only benefit the investor but do others in society some good as well (Premchand 1987 I 54)

For members of a 'parvenu social group to establish themselves in society and to carve out a distinctive moral high ground for their own agenda it was very important to undermine the respectability of a still significant cultural paradigm which was totally at odds with their own lifestyles Given the predominantly paternalist bent of the NWP&O administration those among the public sphere activists with ambitions of social and political leadership had to try to supplant the aristocratic ethos with one more suited to their own class positions Many educated men of north India therefore drew upon an existing model of middle class ness as a resource There is little doubt that much of what they advocated for Indian society was derived from the ideas and agenda of the Victorian middle class in Britain And there were good reasons for such derivations In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the British middle class represented an ideal model of a dynamic resourceful and powerful people whose traits ambitious Indians might do well to emulate especially so when many of the values and the vocabulary suited their own interests and life situations Moreover, the adoption of the norms and traits of the ruling class by men of the service class was of course not a new phenomenon Service communities like the Kashmiri Pandits or Kayasthas and sections of the Ashraf gentry had historically adapted

their own lifestyles to match those of their social superiors There was however something quite different in this adaptation However deriva tive interventions by educated men in the colonial public sphere ena bled them not merely to maximize gains *within* an existing set of norms about culture politics and society but to *transform* these ultimately to their own advantage

CONTESTATIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS

Despite the commonalities generated by their redefinition of respect ability it would be a mistake to see the middle class in Lucknow as a social or cultural monolith in the late nineteenth century Not only were there significant economic differences between say a barrister from a rich family like Dar and a relatively poorer man like Rupnarayan Pandey but there were also significant ambiguities in the middle class agenda For instance in the circumstances of the time it was not possible for middle class activists to limit their public sphere activities only to social or political agenda derived from the ideal type of western liberalism One reason for this was that the British themselves highly sensitive to mat ters of prestige and status guarded these norms fiercely as their own preserve The attempts of westernized Indians to represent themselves as the voice of Indian society were ridiculed and actively opposed by the British who argued that it was precisely their westernization which made the middle class unrepresentative of Indian society

There were also some good reasons for the Indian middle class to par ticularly feel what Sudhir Chandra has termed their oppressive present around the last quarter of the nineteenth century (S Chandra 1992) Government policies under Viceroy Lord Lytton and then the furore over the Ilbert Bill in 1883 gave middle class Indians good reasons to be less enamoured of the civilizing pretensions of British rule than at least some of them had been earlier (Gopal 1984 Hirschmann 1980) In Awadh with its paternal traditions of administration (Reeves 1991) not only did the government encourage natural rulers like the taluqdars to criticize middle class activists they often took up this task themselves While delivering a speech to boys at the Queen s Anglo Sanskrit school in the city, the Commissioner of Lucknow reportedly warned the school boys that after receiving an English education they should not endeav our to excite disaffection towards the Government throw any obstacles in the way of officials or set race against race (*SVN* 4 June 1891 628) The cow protection agitation in the last decade of the century was traced to the influence of English educated classes and others who have

the greatest pretensions to moral enlightenment [8]

In these circumstances contestations and differences were inevitable within the middle class Emulating the ideas or patterns of conduct of the evidently unsympathetic rulers was one factor creating ideological and political differences among the middle class This came to be reflected in the contest between the followers of the new light and the old light in Lucknow as in other parts of north India (Russell 1992) British rejection of their derivative agenda may have been one of the reasons why simultaneously with their agendas of social improvements derived from British Victorian norms so many middle class activists also exhorted a return to traditions The new caste associations of the middle class even as they called for improving social practices lamented the loss of what they perceived as their original identity and tried to return to imagined roots Kashmiri Pandits and Kayasthas who were famous for their prowess in Urdu and Persian now chose to write their community journals in Hindi and learn Sanskrit (Sender 1988 Nagar 1991 Chapter Three below) A Muslim intellectual like Hali wrote of the decline of Muslims in his famous *Musaddas* urging them to rediscover their past glory (Minault 1986) Many of the social and political innovations of the period had to be cloaked as returns to tradition in order for them to gain widespread social acceptability (*INSC* 1890–1916 Sinha 1995)

Ideas of the old light therefore remained a significant part of the middle class agenda in colonial Lucknow One significant difference between the generations who served at the courts of the Mughal or nawabi rulers and the nineteenth century men was that the latter were acutely and at times painfully made conscious of and criticized for, their mimetic agenda Like Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya of Calcutta there were plenty of people among the north Indian activists who lost no opportunity of reminding their fellow men—if indeed they were ever in danger of forgetting the fact—of the derivative nature of their ideas and social practices Bankim s writings were frequently translated into Urdu or Hindi (Sharar 1989 18 Suman 1981 504) But north India did not really need translations from Bengali to be aware of the alien origins of much they were advocating Shivanath Sharma savagely lampooned the dress eating habits and even newer ways of relieving oneself that the Babu unthinkingly copied from his masters (Shivanath Sharma 1927) while Sajjad Hussain did so through his satires in the *Oudh Punch* Even a highly westernized and England trained barrister like Bishan Narain

[8] GOI Home Public, January 1894 B 309–414 Note on the agitation against cow killing by D F McC acken, Thagi and Dacoity Departmen (NAI)

Dar was critical of the anglicised Indian who in his ardour for the present wants to cancel the whole past (Dar 1921 164)

But then unity as much as division characterized middle class politics and there were very important areas where the agenda of the old and new light activists overlapped Ratan Nath Sarshar has been regarded as a most ardent and uncritical enthusiast of emulating the ways of the British rulers of India Ralph Russell mentions an instance where Sarshar apparently pointed to the sight of an English couple eating mutton chops at seven in the morning as a sign of the superiority of the English way of life[1] (Russell 1992 89) Yet a more nuanced reading of the novelist s work reveals another agenda underlying the concerns of Sarshar and other supporters of the new light in colonial north India In what first appears to be another example of pointing to the superiority of the British way of life Sarshar s novel *Fasana i Azad* has his protagonist Azad visit two localities in a town, probably Lucknow One is a European enclave and the other an Indian neighbourhood Azad compares clean healthy European children playing on horseback with those living in the filthy Indian locality lamenting how the latter could never grow up to be strong and powerful He contrasts the former neighbourhood with its well organized library where people come to learn about the world with the latter where he only finds dissipated young men who lack education and prefer to order their lives to the beat of the drums of the dancing girls (Premchand 1987 I 55) There is of course unabashed admiration for the British here but also the expression of a desire which wants natives to grow up as strong and as powerful as the rulers In the world of Sarshar and his fellow supporters of the new light, for example in the writings of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan the exhortations to emulate also point to a desire to achieving a level of equality with the British

One notices a similar agenda at work in the writings of Abdul Halim Sharar who in contrast to Sarshar is best known for his nostalgic set of essays on the history and culture of Lucknow during the reign of the nawabs Sharar was a man of many parts In addition to running a literary journal he wrote revisionist histories and historical novels particularly on Islamic themes which glorified Muslim heroes and heroines pitted against perfidious Christian villains (Sharar 1989 20–2 Russell 1992 100) With his nostalgia for the era of the nawabs and his championing of Islamic heroes against Christian villains in the era of British rule Sharar appears to be fairly typical of the supporters of the old light Yet along with all his nostalgia for the past and his desire to glorify some aspects of it Sharar also provides us with one of the most scathing critiques of the

indolence in nawabi Lucknow very much in the vein of the critics of the new light Sharar wrote

> In the days of prosperity when most citizens were either of the nobility or supported by them ideas of effort toil and the value of time had no meaning in Lucknow society The frivolous occupations they pursued led them further and further from the path of progress Free from the worries of earning a livelihood they did nothing except amuse themselves and turned to pigeon flying quail fighting dice throwing card games and chess There were few noblemen who were not addicted to these idle pursuits and none who was not interested in them No one thought of the future (Sharar 1989 192)

Given that this critique comes as part of a text that is otherwise a fond description of Lucknow of the nawabs Sharar can hardly be accused of being a single minded critic of the nawabi era What Sharar resents in retrospect is the failure of nawabi society to face the challenge posed by the British In this respect even Sharar demonstrates considerable appreciation for many of the traits of the British Telling the story of British conquest of India and the annexation of Awadh, Sharar argues that the qualities of the English made such a conquest virtually inevitable

> British people s far sightedness efficiency and forbearance were day by day proving that they were entitled to reap the fruits of their efforts and their advanced civilization It was impossible for the intelligence of these foreigners and their good planning and methodical ways not to prevail against the ignorance and self effacement of India (ibid 62)

Traditionalists and modernists supporters of the new light and the old appear to be motivated by similar concerns of equality and respect These concerns drove some to emulate the British in all respects and others to reject the idea of mimicking the ways of the rulers and to reaffirm the nativism of their agenda In most cases however demonstrated for instance by Sharar and Sarshar it is really impossible to clearly demarcate the two given the extent to which the same people articulated both modern and traditional ideas Men like Sharar, Sarshar or Bishan Narain Dar therefore engaged simultaneously in multiple projects of respectability deploying ideas of new light as well as of the old The men of old light and the new were both products of a modern world and shared for instance, ideas of equality between the rulers and the ruled This modern understanding brought together reformers and revivalists men of the new light and the old light in their quest to gain a degree of respect in the public sphere Despite demonstrating significant internal differences this contradictory modernity certainly was a hallmark of middle class pol t cs It was also these ideas that helped

distinguish the middle class from other social groups in colonial Lucknow Traditional binaries between reformist versus revivalists proponents of the new lights versus those of the old light or for that matter newer binaries between the inner and outer spheres take us only so far in understanding the politics of the time As the example of Lucknow shows both sides of this divide were manned by middle class activists and it was the political agenda they shared that made them this new entity the middle class It was to seek the respect that middle class contributors editors and of course the readers felt they deserved that newspapers like the *Oudh Akhbar* the *Oudh Punch* and the *Hindustani*—which had very different positions on politics and social questions—came together in their condemnation of the lifestyles associated with the nobility and the gentry and as we shall see also the aspirations or claims of subordinate social groups For this reason too these newspapers were one in demanding a greater role for the middle class in the politics and administration of the country

None but educated men who are well acquainted with local wants and requirements should be appointed members said the *Oudh Akhbar* in June 1882 referring to the municipal committees which were to be created with the extension of Local Self Government in the coming years (*SVN*, 3 June 1882 355) The *Hindustani* concurred and regretted that no special provision had been made for admitting educated natives to the municipal committee in the draft rules of Local Self Government submitted by the Deputy Commissioner of Lucknow to the Local Government If educated persons were not admitted to the municipal committees the new scheme would be no different from the existing arrangements the paper said (*SVN* 2 April 1884 247) With such interventions papers like the *Hindustani* or the *Oudh Akhbar* were clearly making a case for changing established social and political hierarchies and using the metaphors of social progress to justify a larger role for themselves in the politics of the city Papers run by reformers like Sarshar and acknowledged men of the old light like Sajjad Hussain, both represented themselves as the repositories of progressive ideas and sought to distinguish themselves from traditional elites by drawing upon conventions of western liberalism Newspapers now claimed that education was a better qualification for public offices than high birth The *Hindustani* suggested that it was simply preposterous that a man ignorant of English could be made president of a municipal committee It is not necessary that a President be of Royal extraction said the paper, rather he should be a man of tolerably good social position and of high intellectual attainments (*SVN* 11 August 1884 564–6)

It was when their claims to public leadership were challenged that the position of public–sphere activists as a middle class became quite explicit Raja Udai Pratap Singh the Taluqdar of Bhinga (quite possibly under the tutelage of the Lieutenant Governor of the NWP&O) published a virulent critique of the Indian National Congress in 1888 where he condemned the indiscriminate and ill digested study by immature Indian students of the writings of European political philosophers the speeches of English statesmen and the history of English institutions (U Singh 1984 8) A few years later he reportedly went on to suggest that the government restrict the sale of land to pleaders moneylenders traders and the like in order to save the old aristocracy from the depredations of non aristocrats The *Hindustani* s response was a blistering attack on the values and lifestyle of the aristocracy Contrasting the decadent taluqdars with their own improving endeavours the paper claimed that if the landlords dissipate their money on litigation dancing girls marriages &c Government cannot save them Pointing to the false pride [which] is the bane of the Oudh aristocracy the *Hindustani* castigated the dissoluteness of the taluqdars and made a spirited defence of the people the paper now described as the middle class The new landlords are generally far better than many of the hereditary landowners and in time of difficulty Government can rely more on the middle class than on the old landlords (who are drunkards debauchees and liars) for help (*SVN* 15 June 1892 208–9) Countering the weight of aristocratic privilege therefore was the better character of the middle class As opposed to the degenerate taluqdars who followed the same pasttimes as the erstwhile nawabs Indian middle class men represented as thrifty industrious learned and morally upright were the real allies of a benevolent government and eminently more suitable to represent native society

Contrasting their own achievements and moral character against those of an undeserving and indolent aristocracy was one way of earning greater respect for the middle class agenda But for a social group balanced precariously at the edge of respectability it was equally important to distinguish themselves from the large underclass below them It is this effort that once again highlights the contradictions in middle class ideologies Though middle class activists deployed the rhetoric of egalitarianism and achievement over inherited nobility in their efforts to undermine the power of the traditional elites such ideas were conspicuous by their absence when they sought to distinguish themselves from the lower classes In such cases their rhetoric if anything became more strident than their critiques of the traditional elites and the critiques themselves much less guarded or nuanced Drawing less upon the derived rhetoric

of liberalism and more upon older hierarchical notions of the innate superiority of some groups over others middle class activists exhibited a very different strategy in asserting their pre eminence over the lower classes

Middle class newspapers for instance had complained bitterly about a decision of the administration to nominate individuals of high born families to positions in the bureaucracy without having to pass an examination The *Oudh Punch* even carried a long satirical piece on the issue as a petition from a delighted (imaginary) ass to the government expressing his pleasure at the new rules wherein any ass who possesses a large hereditary pasture or other property or cringes or fawns upon European officers will be eligible for the Civil Services (*SVN* 29 January 1880 75–6) The same paper however had no hesitation in carrying a piece from a correspondent who suggested that men of low classes such as weavers greengrocers butchers should not be promoted above a certain rank in the colonial bureaucracy though others who were able and nobly descended were well worthy of favourable attention of Government (*SVN* 13 February 1895 96) The *Mirat ul Hind* even suggested that British officials would be cured of their racism if only they came in regular contact with respectable Indians Racism, the paper suggested came from the fact the officers only met lower classes of people such as criminals *khansamas* [cooks] sweepers washerwomen etc (*SVN* 9 January 1884 27–8)

On another occasion the *Hindustani* was extremely critical of the fact that an honorific title (of Khan Bahadur) had been bestowed upon an orderly of an English Colonel This is very splendid exclaimed the paper (which, incidentally was the representative organ of the Indian National Congress in Lucknow) henceforth the Vice President [of the Lucknow Municipal Board, Ganga Prasad Varma also editor and proprietor of the *Hindustani*] and the orderly of the President shall sit side by side with each other in Durbars and other officers of State shall sit below the Khan Bahadur orderly (*SVN* 17 January 1894 26) This was so much of an inversion of the state of things as they should be that the paper felt no further comment to be necessary Though the middle class claimed to represent public opinion there was really very little place for former orderlies and the sons of butchers and barbers and their ilk in their definition of the public

Just as the Taluqdar Udai Pratap Singh had deplored the entry of the middle class men to places of prominence in native society the middle class in turn resented any intrusion of the people they regarded as their traditional inferiors into what they idered their domain A corre

spondent to the *Oudh Akhbar* complained about the appointment of uneducated persons as Honorary Magistrates He deplored a hypothetical situation where a rich, but uneducated son of a butcher might well be appointed over a poorer but well educated man from the respectable class because he was favoured by the District Magistrate The correspondent opposed such appointments because respectable persons who [had] always treated his forefathers with contempt will consider it a great indignity to go before him with joined hands (*SVN* 24 July 1888 468–9) There was a place for the lower orders in the world of the middle class but it was not in the ranks of Deputy Collectors or Honorary Magistrates The lower orders of society were to continue to perform the subordinate functions they always had It was not that the representatives of public opinion wished the lower classes to remain completely ignorant However rather than higher education of the sort offered at colleges and universities they advocated a more appropriate curriculum for the lower strata of society The *Mirat ul Hind* criticized existing education policy because it provided a literary education to all classes of people and wondered if the son of a barber has rece ved a high English education at a college would he ever consent to ply the low trade of his father after leaving college? The paper therefore made a case for industrial schools for the sons of artisans and schools to teach agriculture to the sons of cultivators (*SVN* 5 October 1882 659) Better trained workmen and peasants were certainly desirable but only as long as they kept to their assigned places in the social hierarchy

Middle class politics attempted to stitch together old prejudices and new ideas about equality in their quest for respectability and empowerment Drawing on the old and new they fashioned a new modern idiom of politics in colonial Lucknow through which they could simultaneously marginalize the traditional elites and continue to subordinate lower classes Yet this politics was not free of tensions nor indeed were middle class agendas always realized To some extent contradictions that were constitutive of middle class politics limited their agenda Seeking empowerment in the colonial milieu middle class intellectuals drew heavily on the rhetoric of liberalism and equality in their quest to redefine norms of respectability in Lucknow Yet it was equally important to retain their power over subordinate social groups and for this they continued to deploy very traditional notions of social hierarchy However, it was difficult to remain consistent in the denunciation of the upper classes even while insisting upon the inherent inferiority of the lower orders If traditional prejudices limited their liberalism then the traditionalism n turn was tempered by the liberal politics they initiated

There is little doubt that the politics of the middle class was not either inclusive nor democratic in the late nineteenth century Despite the language of representing public interest and public opinion most of what they demanded through their public sphere interventions was for the benefit of a very small section of society Colonial policy as well as their own inclinations ensured that they would remain a small elite till important political developments in the twentieth century State policy favouring investment in higher education over elementary schools and mass education meant that the newspapers associations and ideas expressed in the public sphere would remain limited to a small elite audience (Krishna Kumar 1991) Their disdain for the lower classes which in part was certainly the product of their relatively privileged position in a deeply hierarchical society further ensured that middle class politics would remain elitist in intent

At the same time middle class politics perhaps unwittingly did open up possibilities of wider involvement in the process Newspapers associations and new ideas about liberty and equality were carried to a larger audience By the early decades of the twentieth century there were newspapers and associations of the lower classes operating in ways similar to those of the middle class elite Lucknow for instance had a newspaper devoted to promoting the interests of *barhais* (carpenters) by the second decade of the twentieth century (MIN 1916–20) This was also the time when middle caste peasant groups were claiming higher social status and asserting their presence in agrarian politics of north India in a manner paralleling many of the reformist efforts of the urban middle class (Pinch 1996a Chapter Three below) David Lelyveld makes the same point in regard to the impact of the politics of Sayyid Ahmad Khan

> Though profoundly undemocratic in his own ideological statements the setting and rhetorical logic of his utterances left little space for the forms of deference and authority he believed were appropriate to India Instead of an orderly hierarchy he helped set the stage for a political system of competing publics and wide popular participation (Lelyveld n d)

Having said that however, it is equally important to keep in mind that though other social groups later did come to voice their opinion on matters concerning public opinion for a long time they did so only within terms that had been set by the middle class

CONCLUSION

The example of Lucknow shows the Indian middle class to be products (as well as the producers) of the co on al public sphere It was through

the modern institutions of the public sphere that educated men were able to unleash their ideas about transformations of social relations on modern lines These ideas certainly make it appear that they borrowed much of their agenda and the institutions to propagate that agenda from the British example The activities of early British public sphere activists like Addison and Steele gave educated Lucknavis a model to emulate as they worked to create a public sphere in the city Moreover, middle class activists of colonial Lucknow used a language of improve ment and social morality that was highly reminiscent of their Victorian counterparts in Britain But there was more than a simple modular trans fer of British ideologies or of models of middle class ness involved in the making of the Indian middle class The working of what Partha Chatterjee describes as the rule of colonial difference and a government (at least in the NWP&O) favouring social groups like the taluqdars whom they saw as an indigenous aristocracy ensured that simple modular transfers of liberal ideas or institutions were not to be effected easily in the colo nial context

Respectability was the key to the making of a middle class in colonial India Much of the self image of the middle class as well as the way they drew distinctions between themselves and other social groups in colo nial India were based on notions of respectability As the case of colonial Lucknow demonstrates there were different routes to respectability avail able to the middle class For some this came in the emulation of the norms of social conduct morals and vocabulary of the rulers Others found in such aping of the West the subject of ridicule and satire For them respectability came through the valorization of traditional ideas Yet as social historians of India have already pointed out we cannot easily demarcate progressives and conservatives or nationalists and communalists into neat separate compartments in this period (S Chandra 1992 Pandey 1990) The example of Lucknow certainly bears out the impossibility of such divisions In many cases exemplified for instance by Ratan Nath Sarshar or Abdul Halim Sharar it is difficult to classify even a single individual into either category Reform and the propagators of the new light and revival favouring the old light were part of the same middle class agenda which sought greater empower ment in taking up these causes

What was crucial however was the way in which such redefinitions of respectability were made by middle class activists in colonial Lucknow Whether as reformers of the new light or as revivalists claiming to defend tradition middle class redefinitions of respectability were closely tied to a new modernist imaginat on which they used to draw distinct ons

between the new middle class and other social groups The extent to which the men of the new light were complicit with modern ideas about social relations emerging in the West is too obvious to repeat But even the men of the old light the conservatives were no less the product of modernity In their scathing critiques of the established order, their lampooning of the mindless imitators of the West and their caricatures and satires of the British the revivalists too were the products of a modern imagination that stemmed from beliefs in equality between the cultures of the rulers and the ruled

Middle class politics in Lucknow as elsewhere in colonial north India created a new and modern idiom of politics that facilitates the empowerment, and in fact the very constitution of this social class But this was a modernity significantly riven with fractures and contradictions These fractures and tensions were in turn constitutive of middle class politics For one the liberalism they deployed for their own empowerment set important limits to their traditional prejudices against subordinate social groups At the same time of course their agenda ensured that they had to subscribe to beliefs in the inherent inferiority of the under classes which in turn spelt the limits to which the middle class was willing to take ideas of liberalism and equality This contradictory or fractured modernity certainly allowed educated Lucknavis to constitute themselves as a middle class and as representatives of public opinion in the city And in their circumstances the only way they could do so was through such contradictory articulations which drew on both ideas of the new light as the traditional privileges of their social position Yet the fractured nature of their constructions of the modern also circumscribed their political agenda Their disdain for the lower classes ensured for instance that their representation of public opinion was not taken very seriously by the British rulers until the Gandhian intervention of the early 1920s Even though Gandhi did succeed in broadening the horizons of middle class politics the desire to discipline and control subaltern visions remained at the heart of the middle class politics of this later period as well (Guha 1992 Amin 1984 1995) Both the successes and the limitations of middle class nationalist leadership even in later years can, to some extent be traced to such contradictions constitutive of middle class politics How other contrary pulls shaped middle class politics and how these fractures influenced ways in which middle class ideas about gender relations religion and the nation came to be played out in public sphere politics of colonial north India are the subjects of subsequent chapters of this book

TWO

An Uneasy *Sangam* Gender and the Contradictions of Middle-class Modernity

An illustration in the *Oudh Punch* celebrating the 1888 session of the Indian National Congress at Allahabad depicted two women One apparently an Indian was labelled Jumna (Jamuna the river) and another, a European was labelled the Ganges Both women held vessels from which they poured water into a reservoir The stream of water from Jumna s vessel was marked loyalty wealth and great ness while the water poured by the Ganges was labelled education protection and peace The union of the two streams was marked the National Congress and together the two streams of water from the Indian Jumna and the European Ganges fed a garden called the Brit ish Empire (*SVN* 13 January 1889 21) Allahabad is the site of the *Sangam* a sacred spot for most Hindus because it marks the confluence of the holy river Ganges or Ganga and the Jamuna Even outside of specifically Hindu beliefs at least over much of north India Sangam is a symbol often used to represent the coming together of all that is good to produce what is most desirable In using this particular symbol to de scribe the Indian National Congress the pro Congress *Oudh Punch* also revealed an important aspect of middle class self perception Most middle class spokesmen in nineteenth century India saw themselves as products of both the indigenous greatness of India and the education and peace offered by British rule The two together in their imagination, created a Sangam blending the best of all worlds into an ideal amal gam Unfortunately this particular product of the middle class imagina tion ran foul of realities often enough to reveal contradictions constituting middle class politics

Taking gender relations as a point of entry this chapter explores the disjunctures in middle class projects of improvement where they

simultaneously deployed ideas derived from their proximity to Victorian Britain and drew upon an older discourse of religion ethics and appro priate social conduct Middle class men undermined the power and so cial legitimacy of the famed courtesans of the city of Lucknow by deploying Victorian morality and inaugurated new norms of appropriate gender roles and social conduct that made consorting with courtesans a sign of non respectability Different norms of conduct applied to women from their own families who in addition to being modern educated house wives also became emblems and carriers of tradition Though middle class projects of improvement did succeed in bringing together the traditional and the modern the Indian and the European the Sangam they created was an uneasy one

Being middle class in colonial India was as we have seen a project that was carried out in the public sphere This chapter reveals the ex tent to which this project was a gendered one In the late nineteenth century the public sphere itself was virtually the monopoly of men. Though women were beginning to participate in public sphere activities by this time they certainly did not do so in comparable numbers Emphasizing the agency of middle class men does not mean that there were no au tonomous voices of women at all—that male nationalist discourse suc cessfully resolved the woman question so that women could only voice their opinion in a vocabulary doubly derived from the colonial world and male nationalist agenda (Chatterjee 1989) Recent historical stud ies have pointed to the way some women contested the male nationalist agenda (O'Hanlon 1994 Bhattacharya 1998 T Sarkar 1993 Chatterjee 1993) By the early years of the twentieth century women even in the supposedly backward parts of the Hindi/Urdu speaking areas of north India were intruding upon the male dominance of the public sphere A woman reader of an Urdu ladies journal protested the male editor s assumption that women could only write about domestic disputes or ar ticles about cooking and cleaning (Minault 1998) Hindi journals such as *Grihalakshmi* or *Stree Darpan* had women like Hukmabai calling upon other women rather than men to remedy unequal gender relations while Uma Nehru s scathing critiques of patriarchy included lashing out at the Hamlet like attitude of male social reformers of her time (Talwar 1989)

Neither can it be denied that contentious critical or subversive voices of women were rare in the public sphere of late nineteenth century or even early twentieth century north India Not only were there few women taking initiatives in the public sphere in many cases these activists opin ions did parallel those of middle class men (Minault 1998 Talwar 1989) Through a close examinat on of middle c ass writings on gender rela

tions emanating from one town in north India this chapter tries to show that middle class men and women alike subscribed to ideas about gender relations that were often contradictory and fragmented These ideas did allow more space for middle class women to voice their concerns in the public sphere yet also created discursive structures that undermined the possibilities of a more radical critique of middle class patriarchy

ENFORCING A NEW MORAL ORDER MIDDLE CLASS MEN AND THE COURTESANS OF LUCKNOW

From the growing literature on the subject of middle class Indian men s construction of gender relations in colonial India it is evident that their recasting of women s roles from the late nineteenth century involved significant attenuation of the small areas of power and autonomy enjoyed by women earlier (Banerjee 1989 also other essays in Sangari and Vaid 1989) Nowhere is this more evident than in the way middle class interventions sought to control reform or otherwise marginalize the famed courtesans of Lucknow In their quest for respectability middle class men sought to root out a variety of what they now deemed immoral practices in society Activities of women who transgressed the new moral codes were a particular target of their attention The courtesans of Lucknow were not only a group of relatively rich powerful and self willed women who were moreover closely identified with the nawabi regime of the recent past, but were a glaring challenge to new middle class constructions of womanhood It is in this context then that we have to see the efforts of middle class Indians to deal with the courtesans of Lucknow

Courtesans had been a valued and honoured part of respectable society of nawabi Lucknow From all accounts companionship of courtesans was a mark of privilege and prestige in pre colonial Lucknow Wajid Ali Shah the last King of Oudh had set aside large parts of his garden palace, Kaiserbagh as female apartments for his consorts many of whom were former courtesans Kings noblemen and those aspiring to elite status actively patronized famous courtesans of Lucknow and often made them lavish presents of cash jewels and real estate In some cases favourite courtesans could assert power comparable with women of the royal households and the transition from courtesan to royal wife (and then back to courtesan!) was not unknown (Oldenburg 1989) Abdul Halim Sharar the noted commentator on the city observed that associating with courtesans in nawabi Lucknow was not only fashionable but a mark of social distinction. According to Sharar elite society in nawab

Lucknow believed that until a person had association with courtesans he was not a polished man (Sharar 1989 192) Some of the courtesans were certainly well trained in the norms of high culture including po etry music dance and most impoitantly in social graces considered appropriate for Lucknow s high society Sons from what were then con sidered good families including most sections of the Awadh aristoc racy were sent to courtesans for training in etiquette and no doubt sexual skills (Ruswa 1987 19–23)

Social respectability contributed to economic well being, and many courtesans of nawabi Lucknow were extremely well off The value of the booty seized from the female apartments' at Kaiserbagh where Wajid Ali s three hundred odd consorts lived was valued at four million ru pees Some courtesans were also clearly able to maintain their high stand ards of income in the colonial era In the tax records of the period between 1858 and 1877 dancing and singing girls remained in the highest tax brackets of the Lucknow Municipal Board with the highest individual incomes among the city s taxpayers (Oldenburg 1991 27) Contempo rary accounts from colonial Lucknow bear testimony to the important place occupied by the courtesans in social and public life in Lucknow even after the imposition of colonial rule Ratan Nath Sarshar s *Fasana-i Azad* published in 1880 has the protagonist Azad walk through the streets of Lucknow during Muharram celebrations in the company of a friend Azad s companion insists that they visit the *tawaifs* (courtesans) as without visiting the houses of famous courtesans of Lucknow and hearing them sing their *marsiyas* (elegies) no one could claim to have really seen Lucknow s Muharram (Premchand 1987) Mirza Muhammad Hadi Ruswa who was born in 1857 and published a detailed account of the world of courtesans in his novel *Umrao Jan Ada* in 1900 could not have done so without personal experience of the world he was describing

However, in changed circumstances and under the influence of new ideas the world of courtesans was wilting Existing literature has tended to attribute the decline of the courtesans entirely to the coming of British rule This judgement is fairly accurate but incomplete Certainly the sort of free and easy relationship between courtesans and East India Com pany officials that was for instance, described in Hasan Shah s *Nashtar* (published 1790) was a thing of the past in the much more racially seg regated era after 1857 Nawab Wajid Ali Shah s sensuality and his al leged preference for spending his time with dancing girls rather than attending to affairs of state had been one of the justifications behind the annexation of Awadh, so there was little chance that the administration would look favourab y upon the court The collapse of the nawabi

regime immediately removed the most important source of patronage and the most favou ed clientele of the courtesans The new regime also actively contributed to the undermining of this institution of nawabi Lucknow by subjecting the courtesans and their houses to medical in spections new sanitary laws and intrusive police regulation The Con tagious Diseases Act was enacted in 1865 in India to prevent the spread of venereal disease among British soldiers, and sought to regulate prosti tutes who liaised with British soldiers around army cantonments Though the rules associated with the Act were not applied to the courtesans in Lucknow this piece of legislation did allow for more state intervention in the lives and profession of the courtesans thereby further undermin ing their already precarious world (Oldenburg 1989 Dang 1993)

It would be a mistake however not to see the active role of the emerg ing middle class in contributing to the decline of the courtesans of Lucknow In fact in the second half of the nineteenth century the poli cies of the British government towards prostitution were under attack from sections of the British public including, perhaps for the first time middle class British women (Walkowitz 1980) Indian middle class men were well aware of this criticism and were quick to harness it to their own concerns as is evident from a report in the *Hindustani* of 1897 com menting on the possibility of a revival of the provisions of the Conta gious Diseases Act Explicitly stating its agreement with the aims of the social purity movement in Britain, the *Hindustani* advocated self control and temperance among British soldiers and strict punishment for sol diers who did not lead a moral life in India At the same time like their moral counterparts in Britain the paper expressed no sympathy for the women In fact in this matter the *Hindustani* even went to the extent of claiming that there was no harm in expelling diseased prostitutes from army cantonments because every British soldier falling victim to the disease means a loss of Rs 1000 to the Indian tax payer (*SVN* 2 June 1897 366 for the social purity movement in Britain see Walkowitz 1980)

Even before the Contagious Diseases Act Lucknow s citizens were writing to the then newly created *Oudh Akhbar* about the need to con trol and register courtesans and prostitutes In fact the Lucknow news papers of the nineteenth century appear to exhibit an uninhibited antagonism towards all prostitutes not caring to discriminate among the complex hierarchy of women all of whom could inhabit the same *tawaifkhana* (a house of courtesans) [1] Middle class antagonism towards

[1] Within a *tawaifkhana* run by a *chaudhrayan* (the chief courtesan) there could be the high class singer–en rs catering to the highes elite of the land, as well as who

the women they often included in the blanket category of prostitutes in their journalistic writing[2] needs to be traced to sources other than only the colonial government Certainly a redefinition of respectability is the most evident feature of the newspaper writing on the subject In the rhetoric of these Lucknow newspapers of the late nineteenth century respectability no longer resided in consorting with courtesans as it had in the nawabi era rather it was important to control these women so as to *save* the respectability of men A correspondent to the *Oudh Akhbar* in 1862 advocated that prostitutes be branded because [i]t is essential that the women are branded to save the respectability [*izzat*] of innocent men (Oldenburg 1991 139) The *Mashir i Qaiser* complained that dancing girls and prostitution had become a curse to the country and requested the government to take steps to expel them from public streets and confine them to places outside the city while the *Oudh Akhbar* requested the re establishment of Lock Hospitals (*SVN* 1 April 1880 241 *SVN* 24 June 1880 428 Oldenburg 1989 139–40) The *Anjuman i Hind* in 1895 claimed that prostitutes are responsible for the ruin of many a young and respectable man and [are] a source of annoyance to their neighbours The paper suggested that as in the Punjab Lucknow prostitutes should not only be restricted to a particular locality but all their visitors should have to record their names with an official before they were allowed to visit the women (*SVN* 20 November 1895 579) In these new standards of respectability only women were to be punished for transgressing the new moral code None of the

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called *thakahi* or *randi* and who provided only sexual services The social gap between these women was obviously immense See Oldenburg (1989 132–6) for details about the courtesans of Lucknow Ruswa s fictionalized biography of a courtesan also provides detailed insight into the world of the late nineteenth century courtesan of Lucknow (Ruswa 1987)

[2] The main source for the reportage of Lucknow newspapers of this period are government reports on the papers (*SVN*) which contain translated extracts from selected items appearing in the native newspapers. With this source it is always possible that the translation into English removes degrees of distinction among those referred to as prostitutes Nevertheless the fact that the less demeaning courtesans or nautch girls or dancing girls is never used in the translations—which usually manage to convey with some degree of proficiency the nuances of the original meanings if not the language—indicates that this usage probably reflected the meanings of the original newspaper reports In the Hindi writing of Shivnath Sharma, particularly in his satirical articles in *Anand* between 1906 and 1927 which were collected and edited into a book words like *tawaif* (courtesan) and *randi* (tart or prostitute) are used relatively interchangeably (Shivnath Sharma c 1927) Given that courtesans though in decline were still a visible part of Lucknow s society even in Sharma s lifetime this choice of words appears to be part of a deliberate a tempt to erase impo tant social and economi

such and udging them all as prostit tes

reports suggested that men who visited these women should in any way be punished

There were also undoubtedly some direct and obvious reasons for the condemnation of the courtesans of Lucknow by middle class men To some extent their reactions to the courtesans and an explanation for the virulence of their reactions lie in the particular circumstances of their own lives and those of the courtesans Most editors or correspondents of the newspapers in Lucknow were not from the traditional nawabi elite but rather were of a parvenu class with little access to the worlds of these women Their rhetoric could thus be explained as an attempt to destroy these symbols of an older order, particularly when these symbols were a very powerful group of women who resisted efforts at control by men of any class (Oldenburg 1991) The courtesans of Lucknow appear to have made no secret of their disdain for those they considered uncul tured among the people who sought their company in the days after the demise of nawabi rule Azad Sarshar s hero recounts that a rich, well attired, jeweller entered the rooms of Gauhar Jan (one of Lucknow s most famous courtesans) during Muharram but was sharply rebuked by her for not following the right etiquette for the occasion (Premchand 1987 I 42) The adventures of Umrao Jan recounted by Ruswa tell a similar tale Even in interviews conducted in 1976 tawaifs of an earlier genera tion recalled how they had preferred cultured and appreciative people from nawabi *khandan* [family] to others who may have had more money but lacked refinement in speech and manners (Oldenburg 1991 224)

The fact that the institutions and a lifestyle made fashionable by the Lucknow aristocracy were unaffordable for most middle class men of colonial Lucknow would have contributed to their denigration of such nawabi institutions as the courtesans Almost all the editors of news papers novelists and leaders of public associations had to work to earn a living Journalism or even running a printing press was not necessarily a profitable occupation (Chapter One above) Though some lawyers did well for themselves for most part the people fashioning themselves as a middle class had to watch their expenses carefully They could not patronize courtesans even if they had the requisite refinement in speech and manners In addition to a large fee to the head of the *tawaifkhana* the courtesans themselves constantly demanded expensive presents of cash and jewels from their clients (Ruswa 1987) Around the beginning of the twentieth century a dancing girl of Lucknow charged up to three hundred rupees for a single performance and for these performance some of them wore dresses and jewels worth up to ten thousand rupees (Neville 1904

Yet it is important to recall that at least some middle class men like Ruswa were apparently not spurned by the higher class of courtesans given the details of their life he is able to recount in his novel In fact there is much more ambiguity towards the tawaifs in the literary writing of the period Abdul Halim Sharar for instance retained a great fond ness for the cultural traditions of old courtly Lucknow which he under took to record for posterity in his essays Yet he was also very much a man of new ideas and a social reformer and disapproved of the tawaifs Therefore while Sharar represented the almost mandatory consorting with courtesans as an example of the absurdities of Nawabi Lucknow and its moral collapse he also believed that courtesans helped to im prove manners and social finesse (Sharar 1989 192) In Sarshar s novel too Azad—a character with a largely independent but progressive cast of mind—is initially very reluctant to visit the courtesans until he is persuaded by his friend that it is legitimate to do so during the mourn ing period of Muharram if only to listen to the *marsiyas* (Premchand 1987)

It is interesting to compare two novels separated by about a hundred years both of which feature courtesans as central characters *Nashtar* was written by Hasan Shah in 1790 Originally in Persian it is a simple narrative of the tragic romance between the author and Khanum Jan a courtesan. Hasan Shah is a *Syed* (a high born Muslim who traces his lineage directly to the family of the Prophet) employed as a *munshi* (clerk) by an East India Company officer stationed near modern Kanpur. The Englishman employed a troupe of travelling courtesans, one of whom was also his mistress *Nashtar* tells the story of how Hasan Shah fell in love with one of these courtesans Khanum Jan of their secret marriage their separation, and the tragedy of Khanum Jan s death because of her separation from her beloved (Shah 1992) *Umrao Jan Ada* written by Mirza Muhammad Hadi Ruswa around 1899 tells the story of the tra vails of Umrao Jan, a courtesan purportedly as narrated by her to the author In some ways the book is remarkable for the extent to which it portrays Umrao Jan as an agent in her own history After she is sold to the courtesan house by her father s enemy Umrao Jan is represented as a woman who clearly knows her own mind has desires and finds the means of fulfilling them As a courtesan, she obviously has paying pa trons (mostly from among the nawabi aristocracy) but she also main tains liaisons of her choice Umrao Jan leaves the tawaifkhana in Lucknow to set up on her own and acquires considerable fame and fortune

Comparing the two novels is illustrative of the changes in attitudes towards courtesans over time Hasan Shah s novel though t provides

very little agency to Khanum Jan or any of the other courtesans does not pass moral judgement on the life of the courtesan Social hierarchies are certainly evident in *Nashtar* One reason for the separation of the lovers and the resultant tragedy of the story is that the marriage of a high born Syed and a courtesan has to be kept secret Yet at no point does the author adversely judge the lives and occupations of courtesans and certainly it never occurs to Hasan Shah to try and reform or im prove Khanum Jan In contrast despite the agency that Ruswa allows Umrao Jan the novel closes with a didactic message In the last chapter Ruswa has Umrao regret her life and particularly her profession Umrao Jan who has lived a full life is made to express her abhorrence for a lifestyle which never allowed her to experience true love and claim that in the warped world of the courtesan there can be no love (Ruswa 1987 175) By this time Umrao Jan has given up the profession acquired a taste for reading and subscribes to many newspapers It is this exposure to true knowledge which allows the former courtesan to reflect on her life and repent Though Ruswa does not go as far as to have her go into purdah (wear the veil) the woman who has spent her life enjoying sing ing in mixed company and had sexual relations with a number of men says on the last page of the novel

I do not wear a veil nor live a cloistered life (Allah can punish me for this if He wills) But I do bless those who observe the injunction of the veil from the bot tom of my heart May God preserve their husbands and their homes and may their chastity remain untarnished until the end of the world (Ruswa 1987 182)

The male protagonist of *Nashtar* is of course acutely conscious about maintaining his social status But this consciousness takes the form of waiting for a formal invitation to the courtesans camp and creating situations whereby he is invited to their camp as an honoured guest However as the novel amply demonstrates both Englishmen as well as their Indian compradors at the close of the eighteenth century openly associated with courtesans with no moral qualms attached to such asso ciations Hasan Shah casts himself and his story in the mould of tragic romances The courtesan Khanum Jan dies because of her separation from Hasan and leaves the pages of the novel without any aspersion cast on her character A hundred years later however Ruswa the pro fessor of mathematics could not end a largely sympathetic though unsentimental account of the life of a courtesan without drawing the morals appropriate to his age and agenda Umrao could only leave Ruswa s novel after being reformed after acknowledging the dreadfulness of her former profession and after paying homage to the new gendered

ideals of respectability which included education female chastity and in the case of Ruswa purdah

The best efforts of the middle class improvers though did not succeed in eliminating the courtesans of Lucknow altogether The official gazetteer of the province from 1904 referring to the city of Lucknow claimed that the courtesans had lost none of their popularity in the city and that there were still large numbers of dancing girls in Lucknow who often earn large sums of money and are considered persons of some importance by the greater part of the city population (Neville 1904 81–2) Abdul Halim Sharar whose set of nostalgic essays on Lucknow was published in 1913 said of his own time that there are still some courtesans with whom it is not considered reprehensible to associate and whose houses one can enter openly and unabashed (Sharar 1989 192) Veena Talwar Oldenburg conducted interviews with former courtesans in the 1970s who fondly recalled their days of fame and fortune from the 1920s to the 1940s (Oldenburg 1991) So at least until the middle class acquired full state power in 1947 the courtesans of Lucknow continued to exist though in circumstances that were quite different from their heyday under the nawabs

The success of the middle class project therefore was not so much in the elimination of the courtesans of the city but rather in disciplining their world in accordance with new norms of respectability about gender relations These new standards of middle class morality ensured that an institution that had been so much a part of the elite culture of the city before the middle of the nineteenth century was by the end of that century discredited Even men who had obviously some degree of sympathy towards these women like Sharar or Ruswa for instance could at best judge them as worthy of improvement For others possibly also those who had less access to the selective world of the courtesans salons they were only worthy of total condemnation In the new milieu a Lucknow newspaper would suggest that the women of ill repute despite having money or property not be allowed to vote in local elections because their presence was an offence to public decency (*SVN* 23 September 1910 847) Around the same time a man like Shivanath Sharma who was undoubtedly well aware of the differences between a tawaif (a courtesan) and a randi (a purveyor of sexual services) chose to use the terms synonymously in the satirical essays he wrote for his journal *Anand* So much had the cultural milieu of Lucknow been transformed by this time that from being the epitome of high culture in Sharma s popular essays the tawaif became the symbol of moral turpitude cultural bankruptcy and social corruption (Shivanath Sharma c 1927 Sh Tawaif

Kantrens Anand 5(5) 2 December 1909 14–18 5(6) 9 December 1909 17–21 5(7) 16 December 1909 14–19 5(8) 23 December 1909 11–15) This sort of change more than any single piece of colonial legislation was the real source of the decline of the courtesans of Lucknow

A number of reasons explain the varied reactions of Lucknow s middle class men towards courtesans which ranged from outright condemnation and threats of physical violence to more subtle attempts at representing reformed courtesans in novels As long as courtesans remained an important part of the social and cultural life of the city they perpetuated the norms of an older social and political order and thus undermined the efforts of middle class men to recast norms of respectability in their own favour Moreover Lucknow s courtesans clearly enjoyed a fair amount of sexual and economic freedom and were one of the social groups in the city who were least amenable to control by the middle class who now aspired to social and political leadership Finally of course the courtesans lifestyles had no place in the new ideas about womanhood which were central to notions of middle class respectability Courtesans in fact could now only be admitted to respectable society inhabited by Ruswa and his kind as tamed disciplined and reformed women

IMPROVING TO EMPOWER MIDDLE CLASS IMAGININGS OF THE HOUSEWIFE

Though the censuring and disciplining of courtesans reveal some of the concerns of middle class men the world of middle class respectability with all its contradictions, is best explored though examining the ways in which men sought to reform and improve women of their own families The new imaginings of the Indian housewife and the home that were produced by middle class men in the public sphere of colonial India were undoubtedly a product of their novel circumstances Questions of economics were paramount Some of these men particularly a few barristers did make a great deal of money in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century Sri Ram a barrister and small time taluqdar is said to have charged up to Rs 2500 a day while engaged in a particular case in the early part of the twentieth century (Varma n d)[1] Fees of this magnitude were exceptional even for successful barristers Perhaps a better idea of the financial resources of the middle class is indicated by the salaries of teachers A professor of Persian at Canning College received only Rs150 as his monthly salary in 1883 and even the European Principal earned a mere Rs 1000 a month [3] Money was therefore always a concern

[3] NWP&O Education Proceedings January 1883 21 (UPSA)

for middle class families so that even a serious novelist like Mirza Hadi Ruswa the author of *Umrao Jan Ada* had to resort to writing penny dreadfuls like *Khooni Joroo* (Killer Wife) or *Khooni Aashiq* (Killer Lover) to earn a living (Ruswa 1987 188)

There were also new and expensive compulsions and fashions that drained the limited financial resources of middle class families Education the key to middle class professional success was expensive and some middle class families sacrificed a great deal to train their sons for new professions With the competition among Indian trained lawyers increasing more ambitious families who could afford to do so sent their sons to England to qualify as barristers sometimes mortgaging ancestral properties or selling a wife s jewels to raise money for the trip But even some barristers remained without regular work Over 1898–9 the *Oudh Punch* satirized the plight of unemployed England trained barristers as it carried the proceedings of the annual meeting of an imaginary club titled the Unlucky Briefless Loafer Club (*SVN* 12 January 1898 27–8 19 January 1898 35 9 February 1898 74–5) To live in respectable fashion in colonial Lucknow sometimes also demanded other expenses For a variety of reasons which no doubt included fashion but also other aspects of a new lifestyle that did not sit well with traditional family elders many of the new professionals of Lucknow moved out of ancestral homes and localities to modern bungalows and houses (Kaif 1986 21)

Much of the burden of maintaining a middle class lifestyle on a limited budget fell on the women of middle class households It is not surprising therefore that a lot of the writing about women particularly of the didactic variety focused on training women to run a household efficiently on a limited budget Altaf Husain Hali writing one of the early pieces of didactic fiction for women in north India created Zubaida Khatun as the ideal middle class Muslim woman in his *Majalis un Nissa* published in 1874 (Minault 1986) Zubaida is the household manager *par excellence* As part of her training she is taught frugality as well as the necessity of certain expenses to maintain standards of middle class respectability Thus Zubaida is taught how to cross check prices of goods bought by servants without violating purdah instructed in the virtues of buying household commodities cheaply in bulk and warned against getting into debt At the same time she is reminded of the importance of maintaining proper standards of middle class respectability when fulfilling obligations of hospitality gift exchanges and almsgiving (Minault 1998 50)

More than thirty years later, similar pressures appear in didactic literature aimed at middle class women Like Hali many years before him

Sannulal Gupta the male author of *Strisubodhini* a domestic manual aimed at middle class Hindu women first published in 1905 could only see women in the role of housewives and mothers [4] Echoing the precepts outlined in *Majalis un Nissa* Gupta states clearly A man earns money and a woman spends that money to run the house When a man goes out to earn a living a woman can teach the children She can keep the house clean and free of disease (S Gupta 1954 25) Among other qualities of an ideal (Hindu) middle class woman Gupta highlights the importance of maintaining domestic economies through careful budgeting savings and preventing waste An entire chapter of the book deals with the importance of saving planning expenses and avoiding debt for it is not nice to have to listen to the taunts of creditors (ibid 179) Similarly many pages are devoted to tips on potential domestic economies using food stuff that would normally be thrown away such as melon peel or seeds even going to the extent of exchanging inedible food stuff for cow dung with local dairy farmers (ibid 193–5)

Equally significant in this context are the frequent exhortations by the author against frivolous expenses by women particularly on jewels At a time when women in Hindu households had few other economic resources at their command and no legal rights to family property jewels in the form of *stridhan* or bride wealth were an important economic asset under the control of women (Malhotra 1998) Yet expenses on jewels were perceived as wasteful irrational and taking money away from more productive uses by men Thus Gupta s advice and apparent sympathy for women in his book are frequently punctuated by what can only be described as rants against women s love of jewels (See S Gupta 1954 20–4 128 198–200) In a different context Shivanath Sharma when satirizing the new ways adopted by people who aped the West usually directed his savage wit exclusively at middle class men. Women or more specifically Hindu housewives Sharma normally praised and

[4] Lucknow Tejkumar Press Bookdepot [rights held by Newal Kishore Press Bookdepot] 1954 The copy in my possession is the twenty third edition with a print run of 4000 copies The book was first published in this format in 1905 The author a resident of Mathura (and the Kanungo of Girdavar district Bulandshahar) claimed he wrote the book in 23 days (ibid 3) He says he uses simple Hindi rather than Sanskritized or Persianized prose through the book and because of women the sentences have been kept short (ibid 4) The 1954 edition is in five parts and these were evidently published separately before this because the preface to the book specifically mentions that this edition contains all five parts This edition was edited by Pt Rupnarayan Pandey one time editor of the famous Hindi literary magazines of Lucknow *Madhuri* and *Sudha*. The narrative device adopted by the author is that of an elder married sister giving advice to her younger unmarried sister telling her about all that will be expected of her in her future married life

represented as the bastions of orthodoxy in a world where men were laves to fashion dictated by the ruling powers (Shivanath Sharma c 1927 256 and *passim*) Yet even Sharma cannot resist the trope of the wife greedy for jewels and in his sketch titled *Bahadur Biwi* (The Brave Wife) caricatures the wife of a graduate in government employ who is a thousand times more proud of her husband s slavery [that is his job and position] than the man himself and whose demands for luxuries drive the man further into the depths of servitude (ibid 209)

The concern about spendthrift women was as widespread as were middle class men who were often struggling to make ends meet while maintaining the increasingly expensive signs of respectability in their social life The efforts to educate inform and inspire women to make more positive and productive contributions to the household were equally prevalent Thus an identical parable about a clever entrepreneurial queen who showed her husband how it was possible to make a fortune from nothing through saving and wise investment used by Sannulal Gupta in *Strisubodhini* was repeated by Sikh middle class reformers in the Punjab in their journal *Punjabi Bhain* in 1907 (S Gupta 1954 200–13 *Punjabi Bhain* August 1907 cited in Malhotra 1998 123) The new contexts that middle class men found themselves in directed them also to discipline women from their own families in new ways Thus Hindu and Muslim men Bengali Hindustani (that is the Urdu Hindi speaking people of the Gangetic plain) and Punjabi men all equally sought to instruct women from their families in the virtues of efficient household management subject them to the discipline of clock time and warn them against indolence and sloth (S Gupta 1954 Minault 1998 Chakrabarty 1992a Malhotra 1998) Sannnulal Gupta for instance has his narrator tell her sister that laziness is the scourge of *dharma* (duty/religion) and highlights the importance of a housewife following a strict timetable for nothing can bring back a wasted moment (S Gupta 1954 48 162)

If the necessity for frugality was one context framing middle class efforts to improve and educate women then the physical dislocations that often accompanied service occupations under British rule were another To make the most of the available job opportunities middle class men frequently had to move to new locations often to places without the support of extended kin networks Those with government jobs whether in the revenue administrative or judicial branches were transferred periodically as a matter of course But even those who chose their own locations were often compelled to move in order to improve their economic prospects Though geographical mobility had been a characteris

tic of job seekers in India for long before colonial rule the dislocations of migration of the colonial period are more vivid perhaps because they are better recorded To mention just a few examples Urdu writers and journalists from Lucknow like Abdul Halim Sharar and Ratan Nath Sharshar both moved between their home city and court of the Nizam of Hyderabad for economic reasons in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Munshi Premchand one of the foremost Urdu and Hindi writers of the twentieth century frequently had to move from place to place in order to make ends meet including a stint as editor of *Madhuri* in Lucknow (P Gupta 1989) C S Ranga Iyer who was elected to the United Provinces Legislative Assembly in 1923 and was editor of the newspaper *Advocate* of Lucknow originally hailed from Madras Presidency in southern India [5]

Though men s jobs initiated moves such relocations also had an impact on other aspects of family life Sometimes men moved to new cities on their own and occasionally with their wives but at the outset at least such moves seldom included the move of extended families Domestic manuals like that of Gupta s reflect these changes Telling her younger sister of the advantages of being able to read and write the elder sister in *Strisubodhini* mentions the fact that being literate allows a woman to communicate directly with her husband if he were to go a long way away (S Gupta 1954 37) In fact one could argue that manuals such as Gupta s became necessary only when new contexts were challenging older institutions like the extended family that helped perpetuate a patriarchal family order *Strisubodhini* in fact includes a reference to what is evidently a new situation confronting a woman when her husband takes her with him to places where the extended family network does not exist In this novel situation the author thought it necessary to reiterate some rules for the wife as she no longer had the guiding hand of her mother in law and other members of the extended family (ibid 109–10)

The advice offered to the wife in this context makes interesting reading as it reveals some of the concerns and uncertainties that were so much a part of the middle class imagination in colonial India Ideally the manual says the young wife should try and have an older woman chaperone from her husband s family present but knowing that this was not always practical Gupta goes on to offer some advice about appropriate conduct in such a situation which begins predictably enough by advising the woman in an unfamiliar town to choose her company carefully and cultivate only other good women The author then spend

[5] GOI Home Poll 1924 no 66+WW (NAI)

considerable time in reiterating the importance of social interaction with one s social equals Friendship with one s inferiors he suggests will lead to grief as small people only put on airs when they start associating with their superiors At the same time neither should one strive to be friends with those above because to do that one has to become overly humble one cannot behave as an equal and if one tries to do that then it involves considerable expenses (ibid 115–16)

As an *arriviste* social group seeking to define new norms of respectability middle class men were extremely sensitive to nuances of status and rank As we have seen nothing brought a sharper response from them than perceived slights to their social standing (Chapter One above) This acute consciousness of issues of status is apparent for instance in attention to minute matters of protocol and nuances of language In 1890 the *Hindustani* suggested that the Urdu version of the Government Gazette should use the honorific plural verb (*tabdil kiye gaye* as opposed to the more familiar singular tense usage *tabdil kiya gaya*) and suffix the honorific title of *Sahib* to the names of Indian officers when referring to them in notifications (*SVN* 1 September 1890 565–6) The consciousness of status and the importance of marking the difference between themselves and others above as well as below them was now also sought to be communicated through women Thus early in its narrative *Strisubodhini* pointed out the duties of the householder and central among these was that all householders retain their *maryada* that is they be satisfied with their own station in life and live within their limits that are imposed on them for only then would they be able to live in peace and happiness (S Gupta 1954 47)

Examining the contexts of middle class men s writing certainly goes a long way to revealing the uncertainties limitations concerns and aspirations of middle class lifestyles which drove the agenda of household manuals like *Strisubodhini* Yet it is equally important to see that these suggestions for scientific management of household resources coexisted with a reinvigoration of older patriarchal ideas in the new context Central to the message of *Strisubodhini* for instance is a reiteration of the *pativrata*—the ideal woman who only lives to serve her husband Though the *pativrata* was an ideal based on examples drawn from older Hindu religious traditions similar ideas of relations between men and women were espoused by Muslim and Sikh reformers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Minault 1998 Malhotra 1998) Following the precepts of Manu the patriarch *par excellence* *Strisubodhini* clearly states that a woman is dependent in three ways in childhood on her father in youth on her husband and in old age on her son In keeping w th the

format of a modern domestic manual however Gupta goes on to say that a clever woman can please her protectors in all three stages in such ways that she will never be unhappy herself (S Gupta 1954 27 for the Laws of Manu see Doniger and Smith trans 1991) Equally in line with this mode of thinking is the frank reiteration of the idea that women (along with *shudras* the lowest of the caste groups) are not permitted to participate directly in any form of divine worship because only free peo ple can do so And in Gupta s own words women or shudras who live for the service of their masters how do they have the time for these things And if they do then there is always the danger of displeasing the master Nor should women worship a guru because a woman needs no guru other than her husband he is her only guide and guru When the dharma [duties religion] of a woman does not even allow her to fall under the shadow of another man then how could it be appropriate for her to sit at the feet of another man to press his feet and talk to him alone? (S Gupta 639–41)

There is virtually no hint of companionship in the married relation ship that Gupta describes in *Strisubodhini*—raising some questions about the extent to which we can take these ideas as necessarily a part of middle class ideas about domesticity simply on the basis of data from Bengal[6] (Chakrabarty 1992 1994) In contrast to what appears to be the norm by the late nineteenth century in Bengal in this north Indian text of 1905 the married state appears to imply the total subordination and self effacement of the wife in relation to her husband A wife Gupta says should be of service to her husband with her body soul and voice A wife should be like a mother a temptress and an advisor, in different contexts (S Gupta 1954 56–7) The wives who do not do this or pay heed to the foolish and conniving women and begin criticiz ing their husbands only find unhappiness in this world and the next Whereas the women who remain *pativrata* and become sati not only do they enjoy their lives on this earth but also live in heaven Only the women who are destined for hell show antagonism towards their hus bands or deceive them or are unfaithful towards them (ibid 62–3) Thus Gupta has the narrator the elder sister tell her younger sister that However bad a husband is—whether he be a cripple blind dissolute a thief a gambler—a wife should never dwell on his shortcomings She should always love him and be ready to serve him She should never disobey him There is no worse sin on this earth for a woman than to disobey her husband (ibid 67–8) Even if a man were to sleep with

I am grateful o M inalin S nha for highlighting his po n and comments on the chapter.

other women she tells her sister for a woman it is only appropriate nay it is her duty (dharma) that she not behave badly with her husband (ibid 76) In situations of marital infidelity *Strisubodhini* advises a wife to continue to treat her husband with love and respect to not show any jealously towards the other woman and to serve the husband lovingly so that he himself feels guilty (ibid 132–3) In fact the entire section on *stridharma* (women s duties/religion) can be summarized in the sixteen points the author presents towards the end of the book According to these a woman should always appear pleasant keep him entertained and amused not object to a husband s faults infidelities or cruelties not keep the company of other men and should keep her husband sexually satisfied (ibid 87–8)

Yet, even the apparent reiteration of ideas that can be found in the fourth century text attributed to Manu—the infamous *Manusmriti*—show the evident presence of a new context in which these ideas were being articulated A woman the female narrator of *Strisubodhini* supposedly tells her sister that no woman especially a wife should ever think of herself as *swatantra* that is free or independent Even if a husband were to give her permission to act independently even then a woman should never do anything without the consent and permission of her husband Independence is like a poison for a woman (ibid 70) Yet this very statement about women s independence the very possibility and imagination of such independence betrays *Strisubodhini* as a twentieth century text rather than a fourth century one Gupta s undiluted admiration for the 70 000 Hindu widows who he claims immolated themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands between 1656 and 1829 his valorization of mythological and literary women characters like Sita Damayanti and Shakuntala who sacrificed their all for their husbands are very much the product of his own times In fact these women figure in the text only as models of female subservience to be contrasted with the women of his own day who he feels do not live up to these ideals (ibid 74–6)

Gupta s injunctions about the importance of female modesty too reflect the circumstances of the middle classes in early twentieth century India The possibilities offered by new modes of transport the changes in social mores in dress and greater geographical and social mobility available in the context of the high noon of the Raj all no doubt contributed to the growing emphasis on female modesty and seclusion that characterized much of the didactic literature aimed at middle class women in north India In Gupta s *Strisubodhini* this took the form of injunctions against women going to fairs or religious gatherings no doubt made easier by the better transportation available in his own day (ibid

106–7 128) Married women are also advised to maintain the demeanour of a widow and behave as if in mourning if their husbands are away from home In the technologically advanced context of his day Gupta advised such bereaved women to think of their husbands each day and night by looking at his photograph and avoid all possibilities of sexual stimulation (ibid 89–90 94) Modesty is all for a housewife Gupta says but then in keeping with his modern views he does not advocate purdah because modesty for him lies in the mind (ibid 91) This belief of course does not stop him from condemning the practice of women wearing thin garments when going out in public places and advocating a dress code of thick demure clothes for women (ibid 128)

As in other matters *Strisubodhini* was not unique in emphasizing female modesty This issue was equally important for Gupta s middle class contemporaries and predecessors in other communities and other parts of colonial India In the Punjab middle class Sikh and Hindu reformers alike sought to regulate women s sexuality through new norms of appropriate behaviour in which notions of modesty were central (Malhotra 1998) The question of purdah or veiling was a matter of great debate among Muslims in north India Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan was ambivalent towards purdah, advocating it to the extent of denying the importance of education for Muslim women yet also criticizing it as an example of the decline of Islamic civilization from its original glory (Minault 1998) The earliest reformist work aimed at Muslim women and Nazir Ahmad s *Mirat ul Arus* was arguably the first portrayed its heroine Asghari as an educated woman and one who was able to educate other women, and of course run her household with great efficiency and sagacity yet managed to do all of this w thout coming out of purdah (Minault 1998) The debate about purdah also found expression in the public sphere of Lucknow which was an important centre of Muslim social reform and political activity Abdul Halim Sharar was an important advocate of abolishing the practice of purdah, writing stories showing the shortcomings of this practice and even going to the extent of starting a new journal dedicated to this cause (Sharar 1989 20 Suhrawady [Ikramullah] 1945 82–4 89) On the other side of the debate was the *Oudh Punch* which deplored the move towards abolishing purdah as a death blow to the Muhammedan religion It saw this as part of a new trend among Muslims who are adopting western ways and manners and are beginning to despise their fathers (*SVN* 24 November 1906 839)

As many of the existing studies of gender relations in colonial India have already established middle class men wanted to recast women in ways that would serve their own interests best Despite the rhetor c of

traditionalism these were very much modern imaginings dictated in large measure by the circumstances of their existence These modern constructions of womanhood dictated the complete devotion of the women to domestic harmony and efficiency yet retained many of the restrictions of older patriarchal codes It was desirable for a wife to be educated no doubt yet even so she was to remain veiled or at least be severely modest in her dress and demeanour. She was certainly not allowed the freedom of an independent social life She was to be efficient and make the best of limited resources available in the house and be available to serve her husband and his family in any and every way possible There was little doubt and little attempt to conceal the fact that the ultimate goal of all such improvements was to enable the woman to better serve men Thus a proponent of women s education like Altaf Husain Hali for instance argued that if middle class women were educated men would no longer be tempted to associate with courtesans and thus be saved from a dissolute life and the expenses that visiting courtesans necessarily involved (Minault 1998) Given these ideals and intentions on the part of middle class men one can also begin to understand why it was important for them to tame the very different independent and visible courtesans of Lucknow who lived a life that was completely at odds with this imagination of womanhood

Yet as important as recognizing the extent to which modern imaginations were oppressive for middle class women is to recognize the extent to which this modern was fundamentally different from older norms of patriarchy Modern constructions of gender relations did allow a space that worked towards the greater emancipation of women and at least let some middle class women have a larger voice in the ways in which they lived their lives Even a prescriptive text drawing so heavily on the laws of Manu as Sannulal Gupta s *Strisubodhini* did advocate some measure of parity between men and women which was certainly a product of its time and the middle class sensibilities of the author and his readers *Strisubodhini* in fact opens with Durga the elder daughter and narrator emphasizing to her younger sister the importance of education for women Education was not only for furthering domestic efficiency but because it would allow women to contribute to the welfare and progress of the nation Durga argued (S Gupta 1954 9) Waxing eloquent on the achievements of educated women in India and elsewhere Gupta goes as far as to say that with the growth of higher education among women many of them are providing evidence of their intellectual prowess being equal to that of men (ibid 14) Moreover in advice about bringing up children, Gupta is fairly unequivocal in advocating equality between

brothers and sisters Parents should bring up their children without dis criminating between boys and girls he said because discrimination in favour of the male child creates ill feeling between siblings A boy does not think of his sister as family but from a young age th nks of her as an inferior being (ibid 602) Arguing for the importance of education for women *Strisubodhini* seeks to invert the usual logic offered for not edu cating girls of the house Playing on notions of family honour Gupta makes a persuasive case for women s education bringing greater honour to her parents household rather than being a waste of resources be cause the girl would be married off into another family On the contrary education for girls was even more important than for boys Gupta said because a son is only the lamp of one house but a daughter illuminates the house of both her father and husband (ibid 597)

Education certainly allowed the next generation of middle class women a more active presence in the public sphere of colonial India By the 1920s and 1930s the cadre of women whom Minault terms daughters of reform (Minault 1998 267–307) were themselves contributing to the public sphere of colonial north India often taking stances on issues that challenged the ideal of uplift' that characterized many of the male efforts at reform and improvement of the status of women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Hindi journals like *Chand* an illustrated magazine for women which began publication from Allahabad in 1922 initially professed to disseminate knowledge that would better equip women with household skills but soon began to take a more criti cal look at gender relations (Talwar 1989) Even malestream[7] journals like *Madhuri* and *Sudha* of Lucknow in their sections for women readers often carried news of public achievements of women in India and else where and important critical commentaries on gender inequalities and the subordination of women (See for example *Madhuri* August 1922 197 *Sudha* April 1929 September 1929) *Madhuri* (August 1922) also carried the announcement of an essay contest debating the merits of purdah. By 1929 women students of Isabella Thoburn College in Lucknow were discussing issues like the meaning of freedom of women with most concluding that at the very least freedom meant the lack of restrictions that hindered women from goals and occupations that they wanted o pursue (Student Essays Isabella Thoburn College[8]) By 1932 women like

[7] The term was coined by Sanjam Ahluwalia (Ahluwalia n d.)

[8] The essays were collected by Ruth Woodsmall a YMCA employee as part of a Commission on Foreign Missionaries in Countries Experiencing National Movements The essays are dated January 1929 and are to be found in the Ruth Woodsmall Collection Box no 24 folder 10 Sophia Sm th C llec ion Sm h College Library I a n grateful to Dr Barbara Ramusack for

Rashid Jahan (herself a product of Isabella Thoburn College) were shocking conventional society by publishing in the controversial literary collection of Urdu writing titled *Angare* (Smouldering Embers) (Coppola and Zubair 1987)

How then are we to evaluate these modern ideas about gender relations? The above discussion raises some important problems and issues that need to be confronted by any historian of the middle class in colonial India. One striking feature of the largely male dominated discourse about women is that it appears as a mixed bag constituted as it was by a mix of the old and new ideas This mixture allowed for certain emancipatory possibilities for women yet also successfully created important new restrictions for them and reinvigorated older ones A closer examination of this discourse also reveals it to be a fragmentary and contested one with many voices competing and jostling with each other. Yet leaving our analysis at this point does not really take us much further in understanding middle class gender politics That middle class men's efforts at improving women empowered themselves while creating an oppressive and still patriarchal world is fairly well known through the existing literature on the subject (Sangari and Vaid 1989 T Sarkar, 1992 Malhotra 1998) The fact that liberal ideas of some men allowed middle class women to articulate their own ideas about emancipation, is perhaps an even older idea which men of the late nineteenth century would be happy to see acknowledged! Nor even is the fact that the old and new made up modern ideas about gender relations but also other aspects of the middle class modern in colonial India a strikingly new discovery (Chatterjee 1993 Chakrabarty 1992 1994 S Chandra 1992) Merely acknowledging that these anomalies or fractures exist therefore is no longer enough Rather, having come so far, it is even more important to explore the discourse of middle class patriarchy more closely to see its complexities and to try to offer some explanations for the sort of contradictions and fractures that appear to characterize the middle class modern To do this entails a closer reading of the texts produced by middle class men and women in the early part of the twentieth century

CONTRADICTIONS OF MIDDLE CLASS POLITICS

One striking fact about middle class representations of women in colonial India is the almost universal consensus on the fact of the decline in

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drawing my attention to the papers and for her kindness in letting me look at copies of the papers in her own research collection.

the position and status of Indian women Undoubtedly colonial critiques like those of James Mill and Christian missionaries contributed to this perception of the status of Indian women (Sinha 1995 Forbes 1996 Mani 1998) All the same it is interesting to note the extent to which a wide variety of otherwise disagreeing opinion—reformers and revival ists nationalists and loyalists writers in English and Indian languages—all seemed to agree that the position of Indian women in their own time (whether it was the late nineteenth century of the nineteen twenties and thirties[1]) had suffered a grievous deterioration from some golden age The trope of decline was evident in *Strisubodhini* of 1905 where Durga the narrator bemoans the fate of the women of India to ask rhetorically when Indian women would again rise to be as intelligent as they used to be rather than being content as they were to while their days away on this earth like beasts of burden (S Gupta 1954 9 also 11–13) Writing in *Madhuri* in 1922 Krishnakumari wrote of a similar de cline women occupied a high status equal to that of their husbands in earlier times They were mistresses of the home In family social and personal matters they advised their husbands A home was the woman s realm and within this realm she used all her natural talents to undertake a variety of small and large tasks (*Madhuri* August 1922 194) In 1929 essays written by women students at Isabella Thoburn College for a missionary investigator frequently repeated this trope about the decline of Indian womanhood from a glorious (and unspecified) golden age (Student Essays, Isabella Thoburn College)

In some cases this trope of decline of a glorious past and a reprehen sible present was used to justify different projects of improvement Thus *Strisubodhini* used the metaphor of decline to contrast women of ancient times who were learned wise brave women well read in scriptures with present day women who are usually combative foolish dissolute always jealous and competitive with each other With women one only sees fights whether it s the mother in law and daughter in law two sister in laws two sets of mothers in laws or mothers and daughters (S Gupta 1954 20) This in turn set the stage for the long discourse on improve ments with *pativrata dharma* (the duty of serving one s husband) at the core of these improvements Krishnakumari writing in *Madhuri* used the metaphor of decline to call for greater freedoms for women within the domestic realm while the students of Isabella Thoburn College also deploying the language of decline and a new renaissance in large meas ure wanted fewer restrictions put on women whether in the home or while pursuing a career outside of it

To a large extent middle class discourse about the decline in position

of women paralleled their imagination of the nation Yet also like the differences within the nationalist imagination there was little agreement among various groups of middle class men and women about how to stem this decline or to improve the position of women in Indian society There were those like Sharar who felt that removing traditional restrictions like purdah for instance would work towards improving the status of women In contrast we have already noted the sort of opposition that these moves generated from those like Munshi Sajjad Hussain of the *Oudh Punch* for whom such changes were the very reasons for the decline of Indian society and who advocated a return to traditional ways to regain lost ground There were similar debates surrounding women s education. Akbar Allahabadi the famous satirical poet expressed the conservative point of view with his notoriously condescending couplet which perhaps loses some of its sting when translated as follows

> Education for women may be necessary no doubt
> but let them remain matrons of the house and not become social butterflies [9]

But then, someone like Sayyid Karamat Hussain spent much of his lifetime and income promoting the cause of women s education, and had to bear much opprobrium from amongst his more conservative colleagues for his pains (Minault 1998 224)

How then are we to understand such differences among the middle class of colonial north India over the question of women s position and how to improve it? Why was there so much disagreement among men (and as we shall see women too) who otherwise shared a great deal in terms of social background income occupation and even broader social and political goals? I have been using the categories of reformist and conservative easily perhaps suggesting that there were clearly demarcated social groups who constituted these labels But that was not so Probably the first step towards better understanding these differences in opinion and approach to questions of social change has to be the recognition that these differences and disjunctures were in some ways constitutive of middle class politics on gender relations Very often the same text or the same author could and often did demonstrate an affinity with both the conservative and reformist positions

Sannulal Gupta s *Strisubodhini* for instance begins by stressing the importance of education for the women of India After regretting the

[9] The original goes
Taalim auraton ki zaroon to hae magar
Khaatun e khaanan hon, vo sabha ki pari na hon
The couplet is cited in Minault 1998 253 though my translation differs slightly from hers

present day decline in the standards of women s own conduct and at tributing that to the lack of education Gupta states that soon the spread of education will mean that their [women s] situation will change for the better (S Gupta 1954 20) The author also praises the achievements of educated Indian women of his own day and even more so of educated women in the West who had taken up so many of the professions for merly open only to men About educated women in England and America the author goes as far as to say one does not have enough words of praise for the learning and achievements of these women (ibid 17) Yet shortly after this advocacy of the cause of women s education and linking it to the progress of the entire society Gupta unequivocally repeats the maxim of a woman s main duties being those connected with managing the household Durga his narrator tell her younger sister that I will now tell you about that *dharma* [duty religion] which a woman needs to keep in mind when living in a household *for after all you will only need to deal with domestic dharma in your future* (ibid 55 emphasis added) Towards the end of the book Gupta also expresses his disapproval of the shame lessness of western women (*mem log*) who allow male doctors all the way into the female chambers of their homes and freely discuss women s diseases with these men But this behaviour of theirs is to be censured not emulated says Gupta the conventions of this country are differ ent Here such illnesses have only been treated by female attendants (ibid 453) Literary journals too exhibit a similar ambivalence when discussing women s issues Thus sections dealing with women s issues (titled *Mahila Manoranjan* [Women s Entertainment] in *Madhuri*) fre quently included news of public achievements of women in the western world whether it was an Indian woman graduating from a western uni versity or women securing the rights to vote in some other part of the world (*Madhuri* November 1926 546–9 *Madhuri* August 1922 197) Yet longer articles or editorial comments in the same sections of the journals sought to distance themselves from appearing overly western ized In an article that otherwise made a strong case for the abolition of purdah the author made it a point to emphasize that he was not seeking to reform Indian society on western models (*Madhuri* April 1929 531)

Gupta s frankly anti woman and patriarchal agenda is so deeply in grained in *Strisubodhini* that readers may be forgiven for believing that in praising the achievements of western women or educated Indian ones he is only paying lip service to a certain fashion of his time sweetening the bitter pill of Manu esque patriarchy so to speak Though even then, one does need to consider the significance of such a rhetorical strategy and what t tells us about the sort of Indian modern that Gupta so ght

to construct through his didactic text. But leaving *Strisubodhini* aside, let us consider another text, this time an editorial that appeared in *Sudha*, one of Lucknow's premier Hindi-language literary journals. The editorial is surprising for its scathing critique of existing Hindu patriarchy and for the language it uses to scourge anti-women conventions prevalent among the readers of this journal. It bears quoting at some length. The editorial begins by questioning the practice of using the word *abalaa* (literally 'feeble') as a synonym for woman in Hindi and Sanskrit, especially, as it says, 'in today's age of progress' (*Sudha*, January 1930: 724). 'Only a dunce,' the editorial says, 'would describe Europe's women today as weak. They fearlessly fly the skies, courageously swim the seas and drive motor cars at great speed. . . . In learning and education too, they put the pompous pandits and bearded mullahs of our times to shame' (ibid.). However, thanks to these pandits and mullahs,

> the downtrodden Indian woman can certainly be called feeble. All her rights have been swallowed by these two all-consuming forces. Preaching scriptural texts, our so-called pandits crushed the educational prospects of woman a long time ago. Accusing her of sullying family honour, they have destroyed her freedom, and then using devastating legal commentaries like the Mitakshara [one of the schools of Hindu law] they have now decided to deprive her of bread and butter too (ibid.: 725).

Referring to the fact that a wife or daughter had no right on the property of her husband or father, the editorial concluded that the Indian woman was truly feeble: 'she lives a life worse than that of an animal' (ibid.).

From this point, the editorial goes on to a larger critique of the position of women in Hindu society in general:

> According to the beliefs of Hindus, the minute a female enters this world the earth sinks a few inches. A broken vessel is played to welcome this inauspicious being into the world. From her birth to childhood she lives at the mercy of nature and her mother. By the menfolk in her family she is treated like thorn in the side. Seldom would she find any sympathy from the men in times of pain or illness (ibid.).

It then goes on to describe, in the most caustic language, the process by which young girls are married off to older men in the name of religious propriety and tradition. Calling the wedding ceremony a 'tyranny devised in hell' (*naarakiya atyaachaar*), the editorial likens the auspicious red clothes of the Hindu bride with the blood of an animal sacrificed at the altar of goddess Kali. The red dress, the editors see as representing blood flowing from the sacrifice of the powerless Indian woman. This is how *Sudha* describes such a match.

A voiceless and helpless Hindu girl is tied to the neck of an old camel and society expects her to say nothing it impels her to suffer this tyranny and simply endure this play of male injustice (*purushon ki is anyaaya leela*) in perfect silence Even after the death of the old man who ruined her life who cast all her aspirations hopes and longings into the mud who was her biggest enemy and her demon tormentor—it is expected that she live her life only as his ascetic [*sati*-like] widow And quoting scriptures made up by pandits blind [to the plight of women] Hindu society expects to douse the flames of rebellion from the hearts of its women (ibid 725–6)

What follows is an indictment of the life that is in store for a Hindu widow Not only is the widow excluded from all social occasions—for all such occasions she is considered as good as dead—and denied the possibility of remarriage but she also has no rights on the property of her father or husband reducing her to penury Often thrown out of a house she has lived in for long the editors of *Sudha* state a widow has the choice between begging or prostitution as Hindu society has already denied her the possibility of education so that she could earn her own living The editorial finally ends with a rousing call to action

Will the young men of Hindu society and the educated daughters of the Indian women who have silently suffered the scriptural tyranny for centuries not raise their voices against this sin that has been perpetuated in the name of religion? Despite the flames of revolution all around will these tyrannical foundations of Hindu dharma not be destroyed? Despite the fact that powerless women have been empowered the world over will Hindu sisters remain powerless? The present awakening among Indian women will undoubtedly answer these questions fully (ibid 726)

Such a powerful indictment of Hindu patriarchy is rare in malestream journals like *Sudha* but given the growth of radical ideas about social and political change that were in circulation in the late 1920s and early 1930s it is not completely out of the expected either. What is more remarkable however is that in the same issue of the journal and in fact in the same editorial section and less than two columns after this rousing feminist critique there is also a comment on a special issue on Marwaris brought out by the primarily women s journal *Chand* (see Talwar 1989) The editors of *Sudha* are highly critical of this issue of *Chand* which they say is in bad taste but then go on to a more general critique of their contemporary Hindi journal Complaining that *Chand* is too sensationalistic the editors of *Sudha* say that the journal depends exclusively on a good lay out and advertisements and it is for this reason *Chand* is very popular among women While they are willing to condone this populism, *Sudha* s editors say they cannot condone the fact that *Chand* too often

steps out of boundaries of decent journalism despite as they put it warnings from the guardians of good taste in Hindi literature (*Sudha* January 1930 727) Moreover—and here comes the surprising contrast to their earlier feminist critique—they say

> *Chand* has done a lot work in propagating westernized ideas about freedom among Hindi reading women As a result so long the exclusive property of men treated like an old shoe women have now been made aware of their right to beat up their tyrannical husbands thus making them so very modern powerful *and up to date* [the English words are used in the editorial] (ibid)

How does one read this contrast? How is it that there was first a scathing critique of patriarchal codes and conduct that ended with a call to young men and more significantly also educated daughters of the Indian women who have silently suffered the scriptural tyranny for centuries to raise their voices against such oppressive practices yet immediately after this we have this critique of *Chand* as the purveyor of westernized ideas about freedom among Hindi reading women ? It is of course possible that there was a team of people writing editorials for *Sudha* and different people wrote the two sets of editorial comments At the present moment we just do not know enough about how journals like *Sudha* operated on a day to day basis to make such assumptions Given what we do know we can only treat the entire editorial (*sampadakiya*) section in the journal as a single text and try and account for this sort of contradictory positions

It is entirely possible that there was some amount of jealously *vis a vis* *Chand* among the *Sudha* staff *Chand* was as evident from *Sudha* s critique more popular and carried a lot of advertisements—a sure sign of greater popularity and commercial success in any period In contrast reading the issues of *Sudha* from this time one is struck by the fact that they were clearly scrambling for advertisements For instance almost all advertisements are accompanied by exhortations to readers to mention to the advertisers that they saw their advertisement in *Sudha* *Chand* and *Sudha* would also at some level have been competing for subscribers in a relatively small market for Hindi language journals in north India This would have been even more the case for *Sudha* brought out from Lucknow which was not a stronghold of Hindi journalism at this time Proponents of Hindi often complained that Lucknow s readers preferred reading in Urdu even well into the second decade of the twentieth century (Pancham Hindi Sahitya Sammelan Lucknow 1915 Nagar 1991 vol 9 68–76) *Sudha* was also in a particularly precarious position because its editors cum publishers Rup Narayan Pandey and Dulare a

Bhargava had recently broken away from the financially stable Newal Kishore Press to start this journal Financial insecurity can perhaps account for the carping at the more commercially viable *Chand* and the decision of *Sudha* s editors to represent themselves as a high minded literary magazine as self appointed guardians of good literary taste while deprecating the sensationalist *Chand*

We should also take into account the political or intellectual differences in approach between the two journals to better understand the contradictions in *Sudha* s position In a survey of some women s journals in Hindi of this time Vir Bharat Talwar points out that *Chand* started out with fairly conventional ideas about improving women s position The first editorial claimed that the magazine aimed to remove social evils such as ignorance among women to acquaint women on a sustained basis with information of use and benefit to them to equip them with skill and proficiency in essential household tasks or in other words make the Indian woman into an ideal housewife (Talwar 1989 211) But as Talwar says this objective of making Indian women into ideal housewives soon became secondary to changing social attitudes about women and achieving the denied rights of women in the context of new ideas and the nationalist movement (ibid) In contrast to this journals like *Sudha* were still wedded to the idea of the uplift of women and radical critiques such as the editorial cited above were rare

In light of this it could be argued that *Sudha* s radicalism on women s issues was suspect that *Sudha* remained a male dominated and controlled paper, and as such the fiery prose in that one editorial was an exception There is no doubt that there were some important differences in the way that some women and men wrote about certain kinds of issues Uma Nehru married into the prominent Nehru family of Allahabad was always a forthright critic of gender inequalities in Indian society In contrast a male writer in *Stree Dharma* the journal started by the Women's India Association one of the earliest women s organizations in India made a very impassioned appeal to young men of India to save fallen widows and to marry widows (Talwar 1989 217) Yet he could not countenance widows themselves taking the initiative in this matter the day this happens, the day the Hindu widow like a European widow openly sets out on her own to seek a second husband for herself That very day the heart of Mother India will split asunder in anguish and all of us men will be engulfed in it (ibid 217–18) Other women wrote about such issues very differently In contrast to this glorification of the modesty of Indian womanhood a woman named Shivadevi wrote an article against purdah in *Sudha* Far from celebrating the modesty of

Indian womanhood or indeed wallowing in the victimization of Indian women Shivadevi claimed purdah only led to weak heartedness and suffering among women As an example she admiringly recounted the aggressive behaviour of a non purdah woman from the Punjab who slapped some men who were harassing her at a railway station (*Sudha* April 1929 315)

Yet an argument positing essential differences between men and women writing about social issues or even about issues of gender inequality would need to take into account for instance the fact that *Chand* too was edited by two men though a woman managed the paper (Talwar 1989 209) It would also need explaining how it was that an ambivalence similar to that of the *Sudha* editorial marks an article that was written by a woman Krishnakumari in *Madhuri* [10] Writing about the denigration of *Kamini* and *Kanchan* (woman and gold) in the literature of her day (see Chatterjee 1993 62–8 for a discussion of this theme in an earlier time in Bengal) Krishnakumari begins with a defence of both particularly the former This perception of women and gold she says is not born out of dispassionate self reflection or meditation but rather reflects bitterness on the part of men unsuccessful in pursuing both! Nothing in the world can be done without *kamini* and *kanchan* and the critique comes from the fact that

> human beings—and particularly men—don t want to accept the blame for their own faults blinded by their attraction men lose their balance and rush in like moths to a flame losing all sense of right and wrong When they fall and break their leg, then with their lament comes the cursing of *Kamini* and *Kanchan* (*Madhuri* August 1922 193)

The fault she says does not lie in women or in gold for they like fire for instance are necessary and useful and just as fire can harm a person who uses it inappropriately so can these She takes this critique further to argue that such perceptions only come from the objectified position of women so prevalent among men of her time It is the opinion of many that just as a man needs clothes or jewels to dress up just as he needs a sitar harmonium or a gramophone for entertainment a man needs

[10] Of course one cannot assume the gender of a writer from a name alone given that there was a well established tradition of men writing under women s names A man Devakinandan Vaibhav wrote articles under the name Ugramanidevi (The Angry Lady) in the journal *Sudha* (February 1929) Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay had used the same device many years earlier when satirizing the western educated Babus of his time (Chatterjee 1993 136) However, given that other women have been recorded as exhibiting a similar conservatism about gender issues (Talwar 1989 Ahluwalia n d. et al) it may be safe to assume that Krishnakumari was, indeed, a

a woman to serve him and run the household They cannot conceive of a higher position for women (ibid) Yet Krishnakumari does not take this critique in the direction that we from our late twentieth century understanding of feminist politics would expect her to Rather she directly cites and reinforces Manu s dictum that a woman was dependant on her father in childhood on her husband in her youth and her son in her old age For her part Krishnakumari qualified this dictum by stating that Manu only meant that a woman needed to take permission to undertake any tasks that would have an impact on society or on her family She accepted for instance that a woman did need permission to attend a social invitation visit a temple or pilgrimage spot outside of the home (ibid 194) On matters of women s education and the sort of early feminist critiques of society that were emerging in her own time Krishnakumari adopted a distinctly conservative position In our country she said there is no problem if a girl is educated through book learning However such learning for Krishnakumari was completely secondary to domestic duties and then too dependent on the convenience and inclination of her male guardians Given her tone one is tempted to read whim for inclination here It is worth quoting her at some length on this subject

If a father husband or brother can teach her, then she can continue to learn from books for ever Till she reaches womanhood she can even go to school to learn

But in actuality the real education of womankind is always verbal There may be a few Maitreyis and Gargis [two well known female scholars who figure in ancient texts] but it is Sita who was taught by Anusuya at her ashram who can be the deal of every woman Amongst us Hindus a mother teaches her daughter about household work about the performance of duties about etiquette and all such essential skills till she gets married After marriage these tasks fall upon the mother in law This is an ancient routine For a woman this is real learning If there is still time after all of this and if it is convenient for the father husband or brother to teach her from books then it is fine to read books and apart from Hindi learning Sanskrit English Urdu or other languages

Then comes the crux of her position on this subject

But dear readers forgive me for I cannot resist stating one truth here Today having read a few books in schools I perceive a growing impertinence among most of our sisters They have contempt for their uneducated mothers in law Squabbling with their sister or mother in law or not being subservient to their husbands they see as signs of their independence One sees no trace of the natural modesty and reserve of womankind in them. Reading the inflammatory article

of many blindly imitative writers [imitative of the West one presumes] they have come to believe that their in laws husbands everyone only oppresses women treats them like a pair of old shoes [*pair ki jooti*] and locks them up in the jail of purdah etc This is one cause of the great unrest in heart of the tender new plant of Indian womanhood (ibid 195)

Simultaneous with her radical critique of male denigration of *Kamini* and *Kanchan* immediately following her pointed critique of the way men tended to objectify women and deny them the capacity to think comes this reiteration of a purely domestic role for women Her understanding of the role within the home too is one which from any point of view sees women s wishes and aspirations as totally subservient to the dictates of the men of the house Despite herself participating in public sphere politics Krishnakumari makes a strong statement against women s participation in such politics and implicit in her critique is her disapproval of the emergence of women s organizations and the struggle of women s rights that was being carried out by other middle class women in her own day (Forbes 1996 64–120)

What explains this apparent contradiction? Like the disjuncture in the writing of men it may be that the class position of women like Krishnakumari can perhaps explain the apparent paradoxes that show up in her writing Like one section of middle class women she is concerned not so much about abstract rights of women but with securing the rights of middle class women within the household where she feels they belong and which is their realm Of course middle class women were also involved in the battles for rights in the outside world but Krishnakumari has little patience with them Her critique of *kamini kanchan* and her anger at the way that men objectify women however, are aimed at creating a larger space for the housewife as will be apparent from the way in which she qualifies Manu s injunctions about women as property of men Krishnakumari accepts that a woman would need permission from men in her life for visits outside the home Yet she takes care to state that Manu s injunctions have nothing to do with her rights and freedoms *within the home* and here it is apparent that the woman she refers to is very much a middle class housewife

> if a woman wants to give small presents to close friends or someone who has helped her out to invite her friends to the house or not to do her household chores if she is not well then she should have the freedom to do so It is often noticed that if a bride tries to continue her studies after she is married reads books or writes letters to her natal kin then women in her husband s family—who are often themselves illiterate—look askance at such activities and sometimes even encourage her husband to castigate her for this If this is the status

of women how can women recapture their lost status? (*Madhuri* August 1922 194)

Having made the case for middle class housewifely freedoms Krishnakumari feels free to castigate the uppity women who critique larger patriarchal structures and the male *agents provocateur* who created unrest in the heart of the tender new plant of Indian womanhood In this process Krishnakumari s version of middle class feminism allows for reinforcing of other patriarchal norms

A comparable set of anomalies characterize the answers of students from Isabella Thoburn College The position of these women students was obviously very different from that of Krishnakumari For one by the standards of their day they were already highly educated Thus when they were questioned about their views on the freedom of women most students included in their response freedoms in the outside world A majority of the respondents to this question asserted that freedom included freedom within the home and to follow careers (most careers mentioned were professional ones) as well Yet even amongst this group most women (about 12 out of 18 respondents) saw marriage as the end of their careers Thus one of the students averred that freedom of women included the freedom to participate in social affairs Schools and colleges she argued should teach girls to be independent as [T]his would make them conscientious workers in earning their own living if not married If married they would be good wives and good mothers She concluded by saying that [I]f a woman knows all those things which are necessary for her to know and which would make her useful to her home and family then only she has attained her full freedom and does not become a burden to anyone (Answer of Louetta Sampson Student Essays Isabella Thoburn College) In response to another set of questions about marriage most students wanted more freedom in choosing life partners than was allowed to them under the existing norm of arranged marriages though few wanted families to stay out of their choice marriage partners As for the right age at which to marry all students responded with proposing between 16 and 18 years as the minimum age for women and a little higher for men The reasons they provided almost without exception, pointed to the fuller physical development of women for childbirth by that age and the fact that men would be better settled in terms of career so as to be able to support a family Traditional gender roles of childbearing for women and supporting the family for men were seldom questioned by the women who without exception were for the freedom of women

Once again it was middle class concerns that tempered and shaped ideas about freedom for women students of Isabella Thoburn College When asked about evidence of social change over the past five years a student who was evidently well informed about political developments cited the emergence of the Women s Conference on Educational and Social Reforms the debate over the Age of Consent Bill and the fact that a woman had for the first time been elected to the municipal board in Lucknow as evidence of social change Yet the same student began her answer with another example obviously much closer to her own heart[1] Five years before she said there was no Indian mixed club life in Lucknow for advanced communities but at present there is a flourishing mixed club running in Lucknow which has a standing of not more than three years and of which about thirty couples are members For this middle class student the club was at par, if not more significant than the other larger social and political changes happening around her (Answer of Champavati Misra Student Essays Isabella Thoburn College)

It is tempting to see Krishnakumari s rejection of the larger critiques of patriarchy as a sign of false consciousness and the answers of the students of Isabella Thoburn College as lacking in sufficient maturity and understanding of gender politics Yet to do so would be to deny these women their own voices Framing them as part of another master narrative of women s emancipation where their views are only recognized as deluded or childlike in contrast to say Uma Nehru s would be doing their texts the sort of violence that nationalist men did or indeed as imperial feminists have done to the voices of their non western counterparts (Chatterjee 1989 Burton 1994 Mohanty 1988) It is equally important not to deny texts like the *Sudha* editorial or indeed the more egalitarian parts of Sannulal Gupta s *Strisubodhini* their authenticity Rather than try to see the contradictions in middle class gender politics as either the product of some deep seated male conspiracy or as coming from deluded women we need to recognize the extent to which such contradictions were constitutive of middle class politics more generally As this politics was the product of a social group trying to create a space for itself to empower itself by recasting existing ideologies in completely novel ways such anomalies are perhaps not very surprising The middle class in colonial India was trying to create new norms of respectability trying to maintain a certain lifestyle balancing the demands of domesticity with the requirements of jobs in rapidly changing contexts It therefore embraced notions of honour propriety and respectability derived from older patriarchal ideas about the seclusion of women while simul

taneously adopting newer ideas about equality between sexes in its discourse The dissonance that such coexistence produced however was certainly one of the reasons why the agenda of the middle class could not be limited to one kind of improvement alone This was also the reason why middle class discourse on gender could not be entirely oppressive or liberatory either

CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated the extent to which a reconstitution of gender roles both in the public and the domestic arena were critical sites of middle class formation in colonial Lucknow The public sphere through which gender roles were recast was for the most part dominated by men till the second decade of the twentieth century in colonial Lucknow The new ideas about the place of women in the middle class world though framed in the language of social improvement' for the most part worked to the advantage of middle class men over women whether these women were courtesans or home makers from middle class families By the third decade of the twentieth century however, middle class women too were being heard in the institutions of the public sphere through women s associations political organizations or in journals and magazines In many cases their voices were different challenging the norms of patriarchal conduct men sought to establish At the same time there were anomalies and contradictions in their feminist agenda comparable to those of the men To this extent this feminist politics too revealed its limitations as a middle class ideology

Middle class constructions of womanhood drew upon both the vocabulary of western Liberalism, and older indigenous patriarchal traditions Though their attempt was to stitch these together into a seamless Indian modern the fractures in this modernity were often apparent We need to understand these fractures as products of an upwardly mobile social group seeking to establish new norms of respectability which would highlight their differences from the upper and lower orders of Indian society as well as the British Both ideas about women s emancipation as well as those which highlighted their subordination were resources available for marking these differences and thus came to be deployed by middle class activists Thus we have a domestic manual which began with high praise for the achievements of educated women across the world but also the repeated injunctions to worship one s husband as God or radical critiques of patriarchy followed shortly by warnings against excessive westernization of Indian women

The simultaneous avowal of modern and traditional ideas is by now a well recorded characteristic of the colonial middle classes in India es pecially so by the historians of the *Subaltern Studies* group in discussing issues of gender and domesticity (Chatterjee 1993 Chakrabarty 1992 1994 also S Chandra 1992) Yet these historians seem to suggest that this sort of fracture was primarily a result of the colonial encounter More over in the context of post colonial writing sometimes the evocation of the traditional is read as a form of resistance either to the attempted hegemony of a colonial order or in relation to an Enlightenment derived rational–secularist discourse (Prakash 1994) The Subalternists attri bution of contradictory politics to the colonial encounter however leaves us no place from which to examine the extent to which the middle class own agenda of empowerment contributed to the sort of fractures that characterize the shifting protean or contradictory positions Even more significantly perhaps, the valorization of tradition as a place from which to critique their modernity (Chatterjee 1997) does not allow us to fully understand the nature of the modernity constructed by the middle class in colonial India

Yet the simultaneity of the traditional and the modern can also be read differently as this chapter has attempted to Both older and newer notions of patriarchal control deployed by men in colonial Lucknow this chapter suggests were very much products of the modern Yet the mod ern that the middle class of colonial Lucknow was instrumental in de ploying was inherently fractured It was a modern that was both oppressive and liberatory Middle class interventions created a modern ity where both Manu as well as Mill and Macaulay could be points of reference It was a modernity that certainly helped men to create newer forms of control over women Nevertheless at least for the women will ing to participate in it, this modern also created spaces where they could contest male domination or at least create a space for their own interests and inclinations Middle class interventions ultimately produced a set of circumstances that neither allowed for untrammelled male patriar chy nor for autonomous feminist politics

Nothing illustrates this better than shifting our focus from middle class men to the similar contradictions exhibited in the positions of middle class women The presence of women s voices in public sphere institutions in the 1920s and 1930s certainly contributed to the emer gence of a more critical perspective on patriarchal institutions and prac tices as well as some discussions of female sexuality Yet as the writings from Lucknow demonstrate their own middle class position did not allow most of these women to somehow embrace a singular deal typical

feminist position critical of all patriarchal practices and ideas Their social positions in fact ensured that the feminist modern too remained trapped within a contrary fractured modernity Focusing on the fractured nature of middle class modernity allows us to better understand some of the paradoxes not only of male nationalist politics and the attempts to resolve the women s question but also those that bedevil the interpretations of the history of Indian feminism Rather than understand the limitations of feminist politics as compromises or betrayals (Forbes 1981 Jayawardena 1986) we need to understand that what we see as deviations from a feminist ideal type were in fact as much a part of middle class feminist agenda as the more radical critiques of patriarchy To that extent understanding the nature of the modern constructed by the middle class in fact points to the impossibility of either a purely traditional patriarchy or autonomous feminist politics

THREE

Publicizing Religiosity Modernity, Religion, and the Middle Class

Religious categories appear to be a given of Indian history so much so that we have little hesitation even in examining almost as if they were hermetically separate categories the activities and actions of Hindu Muslim or Sikh middle classes Yet evidently the salience of these categories is itself the product of a certain history Undoubtedly European Orientalism has played a role in making religion almost stand for history in the Indian subcontinent but this is also a history in which interventions of the middle class played a central role This chapter examines the relationship between religion and the emerging middle class in colonial north India focusing primarily on events and personalities from Lucknow It demonstrates how middle class interventions in the public sphere made religious categories politically salient in new ways in the colonial milieu In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries being Hindu or Muslim became politically significant in public ways quite different from the time when the nawabs of Lucknow held political power

Examining the history of Lucknow in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this chapter highlights processes through which middle class activists publicized Hindu religiosity Taming the multiple strands of beliefs and practices into a more or less monolithic Hinduism middle class transformations of Hindu religiosity sought to purge it of its divisive and hierarchical aspects and transform Hindu religiosity to suit their own public sphere projects The most interesting aspect of this transformation, perhaps was that this recasting of religion also created powerful discursive templates which were then deployed in many different ways for a variety of political interventions Not only did a transformed Hindu religiosity allow for the imagination of Hindu pride often better known in its modern incarnation of Hindutva or Hindu nationalism but such d — —ve templates served the project of a more liberal

and pluralist nationalism equally well Today the Hindu middle class in India can simultaneously subscribe to exclusivist notions of Hindu pride and yet claim to speak on behalf of a composite Indian nation To understand this apparent paradox we need to better understand the nature of the modern particularly modern notions of religious identity that the middle class created in colonial India

To relate the construction of modern publicized religiosity to the concerns of middle class public activists is not to aver that religion in some way acted as a cover or guise for more real interests Publicized Hindu eligiosity though certainly a modern construction none the less needs to be recognized as an important form of religious ideology There is no shortage of evidence to show that the sort of Hindutva being preached by organizations in India is contrary to many of the liberal humane and even radical traditions contained within the broad category we call Hindu However much one may agree with such assessments it is also an inescapable fact that as the twentieth century draws to a close for many in India (as well as a growing number of expatriate Hindus[1]) it is precisely Hindutva that is coming to define the meaning of being a Hindu More than mere criticism as false religion this is a phenomenon that needs to be understood investigated and explored Especially if we agree that destroying mosques burning missionaries or inciting riots does not exhaust the meaning of being a Hindu we need to understand exactly how such ideas have emerged This chapter therefore seeks to locate the contexts that contributed to the emergence of such ideas identifies the people and social groups who propagated these ideas and explores the agendas that underlie the constructions of modern Hindu religiosity

Even while recognizing the significance of the new modern Hindu religiosity it is equally important (as much for contemporary political reasons as for historical accuracy I would suggest) to recognize the extent to which like many other middle class projects new Hindu religiosity too was shaped by contrary pulls To address criticism from a variety of positions including its own liberalism and the discomfort it bred about hierarchies deeply embedded in the ideology of brahmanical ideas middle class Hinduism sought to transcend or marginalize caste based hierarchy in its constructions Nevertheless both at the level of ideas and practice middle class advocates of new Hinduism found themselves unable to do so Simultaneous with the rhetoric of a monolithic Hindu community middle class Hindus exhibited acute discomfort at the possibility of social or ritual interaction with the lower castes Even the condemnation of some practices as non Hindu or in need of reform could not entirely subsume the deeply held prejudices of the upper caste

middle class Hindu activists The modern religiosity of middle class Hindu activists in colonial Lucknow therefore remained a fractured con tradictory entity speaking both in the voice of community and hierar chy The construction of a single Hindu community remained an incomplete if ongoing project

CHANGING RELATIONS OF RELIGION POLITICS AND POWER

The rise to prominence of Hindu supremacist forces in the cultural and political arena since the early 1990s whatever its other consequences has provoked a rethinking of the relations between religion and politics in Indian history The Hindu supremacists critique of liberal secularism has in fact gathered support even from that section of the Indian intelli gentsia which does not otherwise approve of their politics (Nandy 1990) This critique suggests that the blind acceptance of western secularism ideas has denied the majority of Indians a sense of pride in their religious and cultural heritage There is no doubt that a significant section of the Indian middle class intelligentsia, at different times has found itself ad vocating a strict separation of religion and politics to counter the politics of religious nationalisms Therefore not surprisingly perhaps commu nalism' tends to overwrite the history of religion politics and power in India Sensitivity towards a contemporary communalism or the desire to reaffirm an always modern history of the nation led historians to wards an often a historical representation of the pre colonial past In this progressive reading of history communalism defined as the confla tion of religion and politics is represented exclusively as a product of colonial rule Colonialism in turn is seen as disrupting the peaceful coex istence between Hindus and Muslims which was earlier overseen by tolerant and liberal pre colonial states (Nehru 1946) Both readings of history actually deny the close connections between religion, politics and power that existed in pre colonial India The critique of secularism tends to gloss over the extent to which religion or cultural heritages can be exclusionary divisive and hierarchical On the other hand the liberal interpretations deny the ways in which secular states or syncretic cultural forms too were informed by religious ideologies

Lucknow is a particular target of liberal reworkings of the past, where the syncretism and a common Hindu–Muslim culture of the nawabi court is overstated to the extent that important aspects of its history are glossed over in the celebration of its syncretic court culture (Laws 1979 Srinivasan 1989 Manuel 1996) The etiquette and fastidious manner isms associated with courtly beha are seen to repr t all aspects

of Lucknow society and therefore to preclude any communal antagonisms This position s best exemplified by the statement of Ralph Russell who while writing of the Urdu *ghazal* says of nawabi times that to the Lucknow man the kind of zeal which could impel a man to kill another of a different faith was not perhaps so much wicked and im moral as ungentlemanly and uncultured (Russell 1970) Though some of these readings of history often aim to highlight the role of colonialism in creating communalism ironically enough, liberal and/or nostalgic renderings of h story actually prevent us from understanding the truly far reaching changes in the place of religion in politics that accompa nied colonialism and nationalism in India because they ignore the ways in which religion power and politics were inextricably connected in pre colonial Lucknow

In contrast to liberal nationalist belief a number of studies of pre colonial South Asia testify to the fact that religious institutions were very much a part of processes through which power and authority was constituted This centrality also made religion a powerful locus for the creation of collective identities well before the advent of colonialism (S Bayly 1989 also Appadurai 1981) This was certainly the case in Lucknow where Shia Islam played a significant role in the way politics and power were configured in the nawabi courts (Cole 1989) The Awadh State as Cole has demonstrated cannot really be understood without taking into account the centrality of Shia ideas The *Ulama* in particular pressed the nawabs to give a more Shia colour to the administration and polity of Awadh Often this meant adopting a less tolerant attitude towards other religious groups living within the nawabi domain such as Sunni Muslims or Hindus Sayyid Dildar Ali Nasirabadi who became the most prominent religious advisor to many nawabs condemned the irreligious Sunni Mughal rulers of India [who] neither made war against the Hin dus nor forced them to accept Islam He lamented that Muslim rulers allowed too many privileges to Hindus who openly followed their idola trous religion drinking wine and sometimes even mating with Sayyid women Legally Nasirabadi claimed the lives and property of Hindus could licitly be taken by Muslims (Cole 1989 226)

Nawabi Awadh was not an Islamic state or even a Shia theocracy as we understand these terms today from a time and place which recog nizes the separation of religious and political domains as a norm The norms which the Shia nawabs and most of their subjects recognized were different ones For the nawabs the authority and legitimacy of rule was closely connected with upholding and encouraging Shia Islam Amjad Ali Shah who was considered a devout and p ous Musl m planned a

state sponsored boycott of Hindu shops and encouraged Muslims to engage in such commerce (ibid 198) Islam particularly Shia Islam could also gain converts through selective distribution of charity routed through the *mujahids* and during Amjad Ali s reign hundreds of Sunnis and thousands of Hindus embraced Imami Shiism many of them in order to gain access to alms (ibid 201) Such partisanship could and did extend to many levels In matters of employment in the administration research shows that while a small number of Kayastha families controlled the *Diwani* (the revenue establishment) of the Awadh government executive positions were largely reserved for Shia Muslims During Wajid Ali Shah s time only one *Kotwal* (head of the police) of Lucknow was a non Muslim while 80 per cent of police officers were Muslim Even when Muslims and Hindus did the same work Muslims were often paid at a higher rate (Fisher 1987 218–20)

Religious and temporal authority were closely bound together in nawabi Lucknow and any affront to the nawab s religion—whether from Sunnis or Hindus—was construed as a direct affront to the authority of the ruler During Muharram (a particularly sacred day for Shia Muslims) of 1828 state artillery was used against a group of Mewatis (low caste Hindu converts to Sunni Islam) who fought and killed some Shias because of sectarian differences (Cole 1989 229–44) In 1829 the ruler Nasiruddin Haider was furious at reports of Hindus defiling a mosque in Lucknow and sent in troops who plundered the area, and destroyed all 47 Hindu temples in the neighbourhood forcing the migration of its entire 3 000 strong Hindu population (ibid 228) In 1847 reports of a human sacrifice of a Brahmin child led Wajid Ali Shah to order more temple razing an order which the British Resident claimed was only rescinded through his intervention (Fisher 1987 221)

Prejudice or hierarchy based ultimately on religious categories also operated at less dramatic levels Even accounts of Lucknow which celebrate the shared culture of elite Hindus and Muslims sometimes unconsciously indicate such prejudices Abdul Halim Sharar, writing a nostalgic account of nawabi Lucknow took care to emphasize the extent to which Hindus particularly Kayasthas and Kashmiri Pandits shared in the high culture of Lucknow in their mastery of Urdu and Persian Yet Sharar s descriptions also reflect the extent to which he and quite probably other elite Muslims of Lucknow too believed these were somehow more naturally Muslim languages Sharar described albeit in a disapproving manner, the fact that the Kayasthas liberal use of Persian words in their speech was often the target of ridicule by street performers of Lucknow But it is interesting that Sharar compared the Kayasthas language to

the unnecessary use of Englısh words ın conversatıons by people ın hıs own day whose use of Englısh ıs characterızed by complete lack of dıs cernment and dıscrımınatıon (Sharar 1989 101) Later Sharar tell ıngly compared the jests about Kayasthas Persıanızed Urdu wıth the way Babu Englısh ıs rıdıculed ın Brıtısh cırcles today (ıbıd 144) What ever Sharar s own posıtıon on thıs ıssue the fact that even street per formers ın nawabı Lucknow rıdıculed the Persıanızed Urdu of the Kayasthas suggests there were rıfts wıthın the Urdu speakıng elıte of pre colonıal Lucknow whıch were ultımately to be located ın ıdentıtıes based on relıgıous dıfferences

The ample evıdence of collectıve ıdentıtıes based on relıgıon of preju dıces based upon those ıdentıtıes and of occasıonal conflıct between Hındus and Muslıms (and Shıas and Sunnıs) ın nawabı Lucknow does not however ımply eıther the prımordıalıty of relıgıous ıdentıtıes or that developments ın nawabı Awadh represent ın some way a pre hıstory of communalısm (C A Bayly 1985 also Cole 1989 223) The Awadh State could not be based upon prıncıples of sectarıan exclusıvısm. Naga *sanyasıs* (Hındu warrıor ascetıcs) were an ımportant component of the Awadh army under Safdar Jang and Shuja ud dau'a and a handful of Kayastha famılıes had a vırtual monopoly over admınıstratıve posts ın the revenue department of the Awadh State The Awadh State more over depended upon a close allıance wıth locally powerful and predom ınantly Hındu landholders ın the countrysıde (Barnett 1980 Fısher 1987 van der Veer 1989) As a result some nawabs and certaınly many Hındu courtıers took care to honour and support Hındu sacred spaces such as those ın Ayodhya (van der Veer 1989 37–8) The state also operated under severe polıtıcal constraınts and lımıtatıons For all theır commıt ment to Shıa Islam, the government could not afford to undertake projects whıch would completely alıenate the majorıty Hındu populatıon or ın deed Sunnı Muslıms Theır allıance wıth the predomınantly Hındu *rajas* (landlords lıterally kıng) ın the countrysıde further precluded the possı bılıtıes of an excessıvely sectarıan agenda

Culturally some of the nawabs and other Muslım elıtes assocıated wıth the court adopted Hındu practıces Wajıd Alı Shah for ınstance par tıcıpated ın Hındu festıvıtıes used Hındu symbols and ımagery ın hıs own composıtıons and on occasıon hımself played the role of Krıshna ın publıc performances (Sharar 1989 64) Such cultural eclectıcısm was recıprocated ın large measure by elıte Hındu groups especıally those from famılıes closely assocıated wıth the nawabı court Kayasthas and Kashmırı Pandıts ın partıcular assumed many aspects of Muslım courtly customs and lıfestyle They became adept at Persıan and Urdu and ın

fact amongst them produced some of the finest writers of Urdu prose and poetry in the city (ibid 101) Almost the entire city of Lucknow participated in Muharram the festival mourning the death of Imam Hussain Many Kayasthas built their own *imambaras* (literally the house of the Imam), and Hindus from all walks of life took part in the mourning ceremonies participating in processions expressing grief even constructing their own *tazias* (replicas of the tomb of Hussain) (Cole 1989 115–17)

British rule contributed in important ways to the transformation of religious identities in India Whether through Orientalist reinterpretations of texts (van der Veer 1993 Inden 1990 Marshall 1983 Thapar 1989) colonial categorizations (Cohn 1987 Appadurai 1981 Frykenberg 1997) or the institution of new legal codes and practices (Derrett 1961 Kozlowski 1985 Mani 1998) colonialism created the circumstances for very different perceptions and possibilities of imagining religious communities Sudipto Kaviraj calls this the move from fuzzy to enumerated communities (Kaviraj 1995) In Lucknow for instance the move towards imagining and even mobilizing singular Hindu and Muslim communities was helped along by the way in which representative politics was introduced in municipal politics Rather than acknowledging the many different real and potential communities among the upper strata of Lucknow society e g Taluqdars Wasiqadars Nawabs Shias Sunnis Kayasthas Khatris Baniyas and Brahmins to name only a few the British emphasized simple vertical divisions between Hindus and Muslims when nominating members of the municipal committees between 1864 and 1877 (Oldenburg 1989 80–1) Similar perceptions of social and political divisions informed the ways in which new elections for a board with a non official majority were conducted in 1884 The Municipalities Act of 1916 which provided weighted reservation of seats for Muslims in Municipal bodies in the United Provinces led to sharp protests from the Hindu middle class and was one of the important landmarks in the polarization of Hindu and Muslim middle class activists in Lucknow (see Chapter Four below)

Changes fostered by Orientalist imaginations and colonial administrators policies created a context where it became possible and expedient to deploy new publicized political categories based on religion To take just one instance in 1885 some Muslim leaders had apparently criticized a Hindi book which cast aspersions on the character of one of the Muslim *Khalifas* (Caliphs) A Hindi newspaper of Lucknow the *Dinkar Prakash* immediately published a sharp response stating they [Muslims] should remember that Hindus are not now at their tender mercies but

owe allegiance to Her Majesty who dispenses even handed justice and does not allow the strong to oppress the weak (*SVN* 10 November 1885 783–4) Even passing familiarity with nawabi Lucknow allows us to recognize the novelty of such aggressive assertion of Hindu rights Religion and political power had been inseparable in Awadh of the nawabs In that context the king s religion enjoyed special privileges because it was the king s religion (Cole 1989 220) Hindus and Sunnis living in a Shia kingdom accepted this fact and acted accordingly The degree of prejudice or discrimination they faced on account of religious differences depended upon a range of factors not least of which was their proximity to power and influence with the nawabi court Hindus even prominent members of nawabi society knew this and based their conduct to suit these circumstances (For instance the example of the Khatris of Faizabad cited in Chapter One above drawn from Barnett 1980 40–5) There was little benefit in public displays of or calls for Hindu solidarity in such a context—if indeed it was even possible to do so Any Hindu responses to acts of Muslim oppression in nawabi Lucknow therefore had to be private acts whether through kin connections like the Khatris of Faizabad or as in the random desecration of the zamindar s mosque in 1829 Pre colonial Lucknow offered no possibility of public assertion of Hindu rights far less of a militant Hindu identity

The articulations of Hindu assertiveness of the kind exhibited by *Dinkar Prakash* though were not isolated examples in British Lucknow Many middle class activists echoed similar sentiments reinforcing images of the past oppression of Hindus at the hands of Muslims This when we know that middle class activists of Lucknow who wrote in papers like the *Dinkar Prakash* came from families which did reasonably well for themselves under nawabi rule many with family members who had been employed in lucrative positions in the courts of the nawabs (see Chapter One above) Clearly the origins of the rhetoric of Hindu assertiveness need to be located not simply in some transmitted memory of Muslim oppression but squarely in the circumstances of the late nineteenth century and of the men who created these representations in the public sphere of colonial Lucknow

One significant change with the coming of British rule to Lucknow was that older more organic connections between religion and political power were broken The colonial state which came to Lucknow with about a hundred years of administrative experience in India claimed to be above the religious differences and certainly those that marked the native population Drawing on their own history of the past two hundred years that made religion more a matter of private belief rather

than public policy (see Asad 1993) British administrators did try to separate the domains of religion and politics in India The Queen s Proclamation of 1858 for instance guaranteed the non interference of the colonial state in religious matters of its subjects This policy of non interference has been recognized as an important factor that enabled prominent Indians to make this sphere the site of their own political endeavours in the colonial era (Freitag 1989) But even more signifi cantly perhaps policies like these combined with new administrative changes necessitated the forging of new links between religion and power, new constructions of religious identities and ultimately a reworking of the category of religion itself

Hindu elite groups who were part of the nawabi court milieu for in stance Kashmiri Pandits and Kayasthas had been heavily influenced by the predominantly Islamic culture of the Court Among the Hindu groups in Lucknow Kayasthas had absorbed the Muslim life style so com pletely and thoroughly that they considered themselves almost Muslim (Laws 1979 155) This Islamization of the Hindu elites was certainly part of Lucknow s court culture however it was also an expression of ce tain power relationships at a particular time and place In post nawabi Lucknow Kashmiri Pandits and Kayasthas were among the first to enter English educational institutions They continued their tradition of ser vice by occupying large numbers of lower and middle level bureaucratic positions in the colonial administration Many took to law while fields like journalism and literature had a large number of Kayasthas and Kashmiris They were also among the first groups in Lucknow to express their concern about their identity as Hindus In the latter part of the nineteenth century movements of social reform and regeneration began among both Kayasthas and the Pandits In both cases reformers showed a great deal of concern about what they believed to constitute tradi tion Kashmiri community magazines—themselves a product of colo nial Lucknow of the second half of the nineteenth century—apparently voiced a persistent sense of isolation weakness and lack of identity (Sender 1988 132)

The Kashmiri Pandits had earlier prided themselves on their closeness to the court their knowledge of Persian and even their non vegetarianism The Lucknow Pandits were descendants of migrants who had long ago moved away from the valley to take up service first with the Mughals then the successor states and finally the British They maintained no links with the Kashmiris of the Kashmir valley in fact rather looked down upon them Yet in the late nineteenth century rituals among the mi gran Pandits were examined and those that did not conform to either a

Kashmiri or Brahmanical Hindu tradition were excised There was even a revival of interest in their roots in Kashmir and with it an idealized celebration of the Pandits of the valley (Sender 1988) Kashmiris wrote to the community magazine about the descent of the Pandits from the highest of the high Brahmins The alleged persecution of Kashmiri Pandits by Muslim rulers of Kashmir was lamented and the martyrdom of those who refused to convert to Islam celebrated Bishan Narain Dar a well known lawyer and public activist of Lucknow wrote poems celebrating the heroic stand of Pandits in Kashmir who preferred to die rather than lose their caste and religion by submitting to Muslim invaders (ibid 161)

Kashmiris and Kayasthas had been regarded among the finest writers of Urdu and Persian in Lucknow Ratan Nath Sarshar the author of the deservedly famous *Fasana i Azad* was a Kashmiri Yet it is interesting to note that among the earliest Hindi papers published in Lucknow around 1884–5 were Kashmiri and Kayastha community newspapers (Nagar 1991 68) Like the Pandits the Kayasthas too began to search for and reaffirm a high Hindu identity in the colonial era Munshi Kali Prasad another successful lawyer from Lucknow established in 1873 an organ ization which he significantly called the Kayastha *Dharma* Sabha and which sought to return to the Kayasthas their original upper caste Hindu heritage (Carroll 1975 67)

Of course the traditions these men invoked or sought to live up to would have left their ancestors of a few generations back completely bewildered as indeed would the laments about Muslim oppression or complaints about injustices suffered under Muslim rule Men like Dar or Kali Prasad were operating with categories and perceptions of tradition and authenticity completely foreign to those they claimed to emulate And there is little doubt that it was the changed circumstances of this generation s existence which impelled them to follow the course of ac tion that they did For instance caste rules practices and status had evolved locally making the customs and status of castes with the same name widely divergent over localities But in 1877 Kali Prasad compiled his opus *The Kayastha Ethnology* which he saw as a definitive account of the status and origins of the Kayastha caste and to remove the obscu rity which hangs about it (Prasad 1877) Kali Prasad wrote his defini tive account of the Kayasthas in response to the equally unequivocal accounts being published by colonial writers In this case it was Sherring s *Hindu Tribes and Castes*—claiming that Kayasthas were a mixed caste descended from Vaishyas Sudras and others—which prompted him to write an ethnology of his own people affirming their purely upper caste

status To compile this authoritative document Prasad brought together evidence from a wide range of sources ranging from ancient Puranic literature through to the *vyavasthas* (decisions) of various Brahmins but took care to include an entire section based on the writing of colo nial administrator scholars and Census reports

Colonialism or Orientalism evidently did not invent religion as the basis for political mobilization in late nineteenth century India but cer tainly made it possible It is for instance important to keep in mind the very different ways in which religion and political power intersected in the colonial era and the real difference that marked the politics of late nineteenth century middle class activists as compared with their ances tors living in the nawabi era And the middle classes themselves were very much products of colonial conditions It is impossible to conceive of the new middle class or its public assertion of its relig ous rights or even tradition outside of the colonial context There were certainly import ant and overt connections between religion and political power in Lucknow long before the coming of the British colonial state Colonial rule however entailed the severing of many of these links yet created possibilities where middle class activists began to create new connec tions between religion and political power through their interventions in the public sphere At the same time it would be a mistake to assume that the middle class men were simply victims of overwhelming colonial conditions The concern with religion and the reaffirming of religious identities whether it was that of the Kashmiri Pandits or Kayasthas was quite obviously aimed at securing continued high status at a time when proximity to nawabi courtly norms was no longer sufficient in fact pos sibly a disadvantage Moreover these were men who had by the last quarter of the nineteenth century become adept at deploying the re sources of the public sphere of colonial India to their own advantage To understand the nature of their politics we need to explore in more de tail the circumstances under which religion came to play such a central role in middle class politics

RELIGION AND MIDDLE CLASS EMPOWERMENT

Why did religion become such an important issue for the middle class of north India? Partha Chatterjee has offered us perhaps the best model so far for understanding this concern with religiosity Chatterjee argues that the middle class intelligentsia from the late nineteenth century con structed an inner domain of cultural identity from which to ready the nation for contestation with co onia sm He ocates this concern with

religion in the failure of the middle class projects in the outer domain of political contestation with the colonial state Thus middle class intellectuals sought to claim complete sovereignty over their inner domain which came to be defined primarily in religious or spiritual terms and which also became the autonomous space from where they launched their counter hegemonic project to fashion a modern national culture (Chatterjee 1993 6–7) The persuasiveness of this model can be judged from the fact that even the most vocal of Chatterjee s critics continue to deploy an inner–outer distinction in accounting for the place of religion in nationalist politics in colonial India (see for example T Sarkar 1992)

The tropes of an oppressive present' appear as an important component of the middle class imagination of the late nineteenth century (S Chandra 1992) In Bengal Sumit Sarkar has noted the proliferation of Kaliyuga literature where the recurrent and powerful dystopia of *kaliyuga* (the dark age) was often invoked to express the alienation of the upper and the lower middle classes with their life situations under colonial rule (S Sarkar 1992b 1529) Similar images of desolation and powerlessness were present in PC Mookherji s *Pictorial Lucknow* Galley proofs of the book dated 1883 reveal him to have been like the much studied Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay well educated in English and probably in government service as well Mookherji presents a scathing attack on the educated native in his account of Lucknow calling him A little big fellow with hollowness within a heterogeneous phenomenon for self glorification [whose] walk is oblique deportment foreign his conduct conceited his religion is no binding back to his soul his conception is almost denational his production is abortive Like Bankim Mookherji was concerned with the lack of achievement the inability of the educated Indians to actually *do* anything to assert their presence in the city As he said With all that vast bookish knowledge the so called educated native is helpless to the last degree They talk and speechify well—but cannot show any matter (Mookherji unpublished galley proofs dated 1883 145–6)

The concern with middle class disempowerment was not confined either to the advocates of the new light' like Dar or even exclusively to Hindus Akbar Allahabadi who published frequently in Lucknow s *Oudh Punch* highlights the same perceptions of the weakness of the native male

If you lack strength what is the good of speeches?
God gave us a strong arm not just a tongue (Russell 1992 171)

Or

Pull not the strings of your bow or ever draw your swords
When confronted with cannon issue a [news]paper full of words [1]

Akbar, a frequent contributor to newspapers was obviously including his own efforts when mocking all liberal public sphere projects The realization of the limits of liberal politics initiated by colonial rule was clearly among the reasons prompting the despairing vision of the colonial middle class

Though full of despair and evidently dissatisfied with the amount of influence they were able to exercise over society the auto critique of the late nineteenth century middle class activists was far from nihilistic The England educated barrister and prominent activist Bishan Narain Dar as well as the self styled traditionalist Akbar both agreed along with many of their contemporaries from differing ideological persuasions that religion in some way constituted an answer to their problems Dar for instance attributed the absence of genius in modern India to the lack of moral fibre in young men of his time [he was 32 then] which in turn he attributed to their lack of religion Morality he said has been so closely connected with religion since history began that whenever religious sanction has grown weak serious moral injuries have occurred to mankind (Dar 1921 89) In another essay he argued that an education that deprived native students of a religious and moral basis to their curriculum was leading to the death of a nation (ibid 29) The oppressive corrupt alienating present was blamed on the fact that society had gone astray from its ancient religious ideals Not only that but the lack of religion was seen as one of the causes for their lack of freedom and strength Virtually echoing Dar s sentiments on this matter Akbar wrote

Akbar in your verse repeat this theme again and again
Muslim take up your rosary Brahman wear your sacred thread (Russel 1992 161)

Partha Chatterjee s thesis it seems stands vindicated with this evidence The religiosity of the nineteenth century middle class in Lucknow as in Bengal appears to closely reflect its concern with overcoming perceptions of inadequacy and disempowerment which in turn, was seen by it as a direct product of the colonial experience But before accepting Chatterjee s thesis *in toto* it may perhaps be useful to look more closely both at what these activists did as well as said about religion in colonial

Kheencho na kammanon ko na talwar nikalo. Jab top mukaabil ho, to akhbaa nikaalo (Parmanand 1985 32) Translation mine

India The controversy surrounding cow protection in the 1890s provides one context where this concern of middle class activists was very evident It is also a prime example of the ways in which religion came to be harnessed and appropriated to middle class projects The cow protection movement did not have a direct impact on the city of Lucknow It was at its strongest in the Bhojpuri speaking region particularly the district of Azamgarh where in 1893 a massed group of Hindus attacked Muslim property and people to liberate cows in the name of *Gaurakshini Sabhas* (Cow Protection Leagues) which had been active in the region for a while Gyanendra Pandey in his study of these riots has pointed to the multiple meanings which participants brought to these riots His study also shows the fuzziness of class caste and religious identities present in the movement Especially he points to the cohesion as well as the contradictions which were present in the invocation of a Hindu identity in the mobilization efforts of leaders and participants in the movement (Pandey 1990)

Bishan Narain Dar, in his capacity as a lawyer, was called upon to defend some Hindus convicted of rioting in Azamgarh He visited the area and independently published a report which primarily blamed the meddlesomeness of colonial authorities for the trouble between Hindus and Muslims (Dar 1893) His agenda was fairly explicit

I have no particular liking for the [*Gaurakshini*] *Sabha* myself as I think that such institutions whether they be Hindu or Mohammedan do more harm then good in the long run yet I do not see the wisdom and even the justice in interfering with other people s religious persuasion (ibid Appendix 6)

While turning a blind eye to the interference which Hindu *Sabhas* had practised Dar highlighted the actions of British officials in Azamgarh as evidence of interference of government in the religious practices of Hindus The prosecution of Hindu rioters was by him represented as religious persecution pure and simple (ibid 9) Expressing grief at the partisan attitude of the colonial government towards Hindus Dar depicted the whole affair as one in a series of happenings where Hindu religion is insulted and Hindu practices are treated with unconcealed scorn (ibid 10)

One could with Partha Chatterjee argue that the roots of this imagination lie in the middle class perception of its oppression at the hands of the colonial state especially if we add to his thesis the gendered dimension of a perceived emasculation though the workings of a colonial masculinity (Sinha 1995 Rosselli 1980) It was to overcome this perception of oppr to seek new sources of self respect that middle class activists

like Dar sought to selectively celebrate aspects of what they perceived at evidence of Hindu manliness in A amgarh In his report for instance Dar complained that Hindus have for years and years been treated like the proverbial dog whom any stick is good enough to beat with (Dar 1893 30) What he celebrated through this repo t was the possibility that the Hindu peasants actions had opened up for the imagining of a strong and virile community in contrast to his perceptions of a dis empowered and oppressed one It was the desire to celebrate a strong virile native self which led Dar to adopt a position valori ing the col lective violence against Muslims enacted in A amgarh Despite dis tancing himself from the actions of the rioters Dar demonstrated pride in the actions of the Hindu sabha activists of Azamgarh s mply because their actions proved to him that the Hindus are not quite such a meek unmanly and contemptible race as they have been imagined (ibid 28)

Yet a closer look at the same report begins to reveal certain limitations in Chatterjee s approach There was no doubt an element of the desire to contest the colonial domination of public sphere politics through the valorization of religion which could be construed here too as an inner domain a place of one s own Yet for one this was certainly no retreat into any domain uncolonized or otherwise On the contrary Dar used the report to criticize colonial official actions and bring the question of religion very much into the domain of public contestation with the state and its administration [2] But of much greater significance is the fac that focusing exclusively on middle class contestation with the colonial state ignores the very important ways in which this sort of politics sought to empower the middle class *vis a vis* other social groups in Indian society In titling his report *An Appeal to the English Public on behalf of the Hindus of North western Provinces and Oudh*, Dar explicitly made this criticism as a Hindu and more significantly as a (self appointed) representative of the Hindu community of the Province Dar s report, however com pletely appropriated the complex web of events and ideas which contrib uted to the disturbances in Azamgarh to the agenda of middle class politics The multiple meanings of Hindu ness present in Azamgarh were submerged in Dar s report The report also made it evident that Dar s concerns were not really with Azamgarh or even the cow protection

This is also how it was primarily read by the administration Dar s report was widely cited and criticized within the administration for its anti government tone For one such interpre tation see the official report on Dar written at the time he was elected President of the 1911 session of the Indian Na ional Co GO Home Pol January 9 2, B 3 (NAI

movement Despite acting as the lawyer for some members of the cow protection movement Dar described the movement as humane though somewhat impractical (ibid 8) Moreover in his report he was quite willing to acknowledge what he termed the good deal of latent barba rism present among the participants The interventions of men like Dar produced a new and specifically middle class discourse of Hindu religi osity No doubt serving to overcome perceptions of middle class inad equacy the striking point about this middle class religiosity was that on the one hand it distanced itself from the latent barbarism of the reli gious practices of the illiterate peasants of Azamgarh yet on the other still used the opportunity to celebrate Hindu valour and defend Hindu rights

The next year the Lucknow paper which had earlier serialized Dar s report on its pages articulated middle class concerns with religion in an even more forthright fashion In his despatch to the Secretary of State on the causes of the Cow Protection riots of 1893 the Viceroy had ap parently highlighted the role of prevailing Hindu revivalist movements the contents of native newspapers and improvements in means of com munication The *Hindustani* of Lucknow responded immediately and significantly saying

> the Julahas (Muhammedan weavers) and Ahirs (Hindu cowherds) and other such persons who commit riots are steeped in ignorance They do not read newspapers Neither the increased facilities of communication and the writings of newspapers *nor the forwardness of the Hindus in the race of life and the revival of Hindu religion* can account for the frequent outbreaks of fanaticism The igno rance of the people and the indiscretion of some officers are really at the bottom of these unfortunate quarrels Is Government prepared to put back the hands of the clock and tell the Hindus to stop making further progress in education and trade or interfere with the revival of Hindu religion? Certainly not (*Hindustani* 23 May 1894 *SVN* 9 May 1894 225 Emphasis added parenthetical explana tions in the original)

The metaphor of the race of life is crucial to understanding the con cerns of the middle class activists in late nineteenth century Lucknow Forwardness in the race of life as much as projects seeking the revival of Hindu religion the *Hindustani* clearly shows was a specifically middle class project Julahas and Ahirs were not participating in this race They were neither really any part of the Hindu community that middle class activists were imagining in the late nineteenth century

An important problem with Partha Chatterjee s formulation is that it treats religion itself as an already understood and unproblematic entity

There is no room in his analysis for instance to see the ways in which religiosity itself was reconfigured and recast in the colonial context or how such religiosity or notions of religious community could be deployed by men in ways that were completely different from older beliefs and practices Even a cursory examination of the rhetoric of middle class religiosity in late nineteenth century Lucknow is quite revealing in this regard For one questions of worship devotion or quotidian existence are almost absent from the contexts in which such religiosity was articulated Dar in his report on the riots in Azamgarh for instance had little to say about what actually he understood by Hindu religion but spoke a great deal about the rights of the Hindu community Though seeking to represent Hindus of his province any references to Hindu devotional practices in Dar s report were either condescending or derogatory Dar lived at a time when the debates between Hindu reformers and revivalists were particularly keen In fact Dar was himself at the centre of a controversy about religious practices when his decision to go to England to study law led to a split in the Kashmiri community of north India and his own temporary ostracism from the community (Sender 1988) Despite that and the fact that Dar left behind copious amounts of writing much of it stressing the importance of religion we are left with no clue as to his own position on matters of devotional practice whether for instance he advocated a return to *varnashram dharma* (religion based on the fourfold caste hierarchy) or some reformed variant of Hinduism

For these reasons then, it is important to reconsider Chatterjee s thesis or at least to add to his formulations There is little doubt that middle class men did indeed find in religion a resource for overcoming their perceptions of disempowerment *vis à vis* the colonial state That this was not a literal retreat from public sphere politics into some uncolonized domain is also quite evident from their actions and quite possibly that is not what Chatterjee means to imply either Middle class activists were for instance perfectly content to continue to petition or at least influence the decisions of the colonial administration on such matters too for Dar s report was after all an appeal to the English public aimed ultimately at influencing the working of the colonial administration The real issue is that seeing religion—at least the religiosity of the middle class in their political projects—in any way constituting an inner or uncolonized seriously limits our understanding both of the nature of middle class agendas and of the category of religion

For one treating religion as a synchronic entity ignores the ways in which religiosity itself was cast in very new terms through middle class

interventions in colonial India Second exclusively looking at religion as a way of contesting colonial hegemony glosses over the ways in religion like other middle class interventions was actively concerned with the empowerment of this social group over others Together they obscure the important historical connections between religion and power Rather than focusing only on what made the middle class feel good about religion we need to examine the nature of middle class interventions more closely to see how these produced new notions of a proper religiosity Doing so will allow us to see not only the ways in which a recast religiosity worked to empower the middle class but also to see this project like others they undertook was shaped by contrary pulls A closer examination of middle class religiosity then will allow us to highlight both the possibilities and limits in the agenda of middle class politics

THE POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS OF A PUBLICIZED RELIGIOSITY

Once religion became central to the concerns of a social group that was able to exercise power in the public sphere it became necessary to reinvent religion itself Traditional conceptions of religion prevailing cultural practices and religious beliefs could not easily serve the projects which were part of the agenda of the emerging middle class Middle class activists actively engaged in attempts to highlight and on occasion invent traditions suitable for deploying in the public sphere However the multiplicity of traditions of Hindu religious social and cultural practices made their task extremely difficult Existing Hindu religiosity—with multiple traditions metaphysical speculations and most obviously social practices governed by hierarchical principles—was clearly unsuitable as the basis of an ideology to mobilize a public and create a community which could be represented by the middle class The frequent critique of religious practices demonstrates the exasperation of middle class activists with existing Hinduism and their desire to change it Their newer interpretations of Hindu religiosity stressed its active this worldly orientation and non divisive aspects Through such reinterpretations activists sought to create a religiosity which could most effectively be deployed in the public sphere This publicized Hindu religiosity emphasized community rather than hierarchy unity rather than divisions and difference activism rather than mere contemplation and the exercise of reason over blind faith

Involved in efforts at redefining religion were not only lay public sphere activists but also religious specialists or those who had taken ascetic vows Swami Vivekananda was probably the most famous of such

patriotic sanyasis (Raychaudhri 1988 S Sarkar 1992b) In Lucknow it was Swami Rama Tirtha and later his disciple Narain Swami who caught the imagination of the middle class [3] Rama Tirtha was born Tirath Rama the son of a temple priest of limited means in a village in the Gujranwala district of Punjab in 1873 but managed to complete his B A and then an M A in mathematics Belying family hopes of a government job he took to teaching and by 1896 was a professor of Mathematics at the Mission College in Lahore (Sharga 1968 Puran Singh 1974 S R Sharma 1961 also Rinehart 1992)

Rama Tirtha s final decision to adopt the path of *Advaita Vedanta* (a monist philosophy based upon the Upanishads) and lead the life of a monk has been linked to his meeting with Vivekananda in Lahore in 1897 and it is certainly to Vivekananda that Rama Tirtha owed his philosophy of Practical Vedanta which blended philosophical monism of the Upanishads with patriotism and humanity (Puran Singh 1974 87) Like Vivekananda Rama Tirtha also travelled abroad and spent some time in Japan as well as the United States Like Vivekananda he too was very impressed by what he saw in both countries and the experience provided an impetus to his rethinking of religious ideas [4] The same experience also highlighted for Rama Tirtha the extent to which India suffered in comparison to these places and reinforced the perception of India s decline and the necessity of its revival The experience also directed more of his writing towards the outside world to address the social cultural and political problems of India According to Rama Tirtha the reason both for India s decline and the success of the West particularly America lay in the fact that unknowingly they [Americans] have brought Vedanta into the conduct of their lives (*aacharan*) India s decline has been caused by the loss of Vedanta in *aacharan* (Aphorism #32 Rama Tirtha 1982 6)

[3] Ganga Prasad Varma s biographical sketch mentions that he was a great devotee of Swami Rama Tirtha. if the Swamiji came to a neighbouring town, he personally went to have his *Darshan* and to bring him to Lucknow *DNB* vol IV 409 Varma was one of the most influential participants in the Municipal Board and has been hailed as the maker of modern Lucknow (ibid) After Rama Tirtha s death it was in Lucknow that his disciple Narain Swami set up the Rama Tirtha Pratishthan to propagate the message of his teacher and master.

[4] Tirath Rama took *sanyas* (renounced the world) in 1901 By 1902 he counted among his disciples Kirti Shah the Maharaja of Tehri who financed Rama Tirtha s visit to Japan and the United States It is interesting to note that a large proportion of Swami Rama Tirtha s nationalist writings which have been collected into one volume by the Rama Tirtha Pratishthan are e ther while abroad, or refer o his experiences abroad (Rama Tirtha 982

Rama Tirtha s religiosity therefore was quite the opposite of any sort of otherworldly speculation Vedanta locked in cupboards will just not do he wrote thus breaking from the path of Upanishadic philosophical abstraction and firmly establishing Hindu religiosity in the public sphere (Aphorism #83 Rama Tirtha 1982 15) Rama Tirtha s Vedanta had no place for rituals either Rather than traditional sacrifices (*yagna*) he urged disciples to use the ingredients normally used in such sacrifices to feed the poor (Aphorism #16 ibid 3) In the contemporary world Rama Tirtha argued sacrifice (*yagna*) requires not innocent animals but rather to consign to the flames of love all our feelings of groupism that is caste and religious differences (*jati bhed*) and envy which alone can bring us heaven on earth (Aphorism #60 ibid 11) Ultimately Rama Tirtha s Vedanta was a way of eliminating weakness If Vedanta does not remove your weakness if it does not make you happy if it does not lighten your burden then cast it aside (Aphorism #84 ibid)

Real religion—politicians and poets activists and ascetics alike seemed to agree—did not lie in philosophical abstractions or blind devotion or ritual practices Rather real religion was intimately tied up with the world with the concerns and problems of people For the Kashmiri Pandit Brij Narain Chakbast lawyer poet and nationalist real religion lay in practices connected to the world One cannot be called a Brahmin by merely wearing the sacred thread wrote Chakbast His own conception of religion according to his biographer, was intimately connected to service of man and upholding of human freedom (Kaif 1986 35) Such an anthropocentric view of religion tied to ideas of humanity and national uplift was a defining quality of the middle class religiosity of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

These newly created middle class standards of a real Hinduism were not only ideas but often deployed to control or change many existing traditions and practices Middle class activists often exercised their critical voice and attempted to reform a number of other Hindu religious institutions in the name of a real religion The *sadhus* (wandering ascetics) of India were one of their favourite targets particularly for their indolence Undoubtedly the fractious and fiercely independent nature of many of the ascetic sects added to the desire to reform the sadhus (van der Veer 1989 Pinch 1996b) Rama Tirtha despite his own ascetic vows was highly critical of Indian sadhus, comparing them to unhealthy scum on a lake and as suckers and parasites to the tree of nationality (Sharga 1968 155) His disciple Narain Swami, attempted to discipline these wandering ascetics, most of whom had their own unique rules of initiation and conduct and set up a Sadhu Mahavidyalaya (University

for Sadhus) at Hardwar so that illiterate sadhus could be given what was considered an appropriate Sanskrit education (Swami Rama Tirtha Pratisthan 25) Narain Swami was also active in the United Provinces Dharma Rakshana Sabha which sought to make Hindu charitable endowments more accountable to the public and in 1927 persuaded the government to set up the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Committee to suggest measures for their better management (Sharga 1968 408–9)

Equally important was the disciplining and reformulation of everyday religious practices and here women were a particular target of reforming zeal as they were not only believed to be inherently more religious but because they could produce and shape future appropriately religious subjects (Chapter Two above Malhotra 1998 Minault 1998) Sannulal Gupta s didactic manual for middle class women *Strisubodhini* in addition to other advice sought to educate and improve women in this crucial aspect of their behaviour. Gupta warns women against superstition and the various charlatans who adopt a religious guise Most religious specialists but particularly wandering ascetics those claiming powers of divine possession or sorcery though also venal Brahmin priests are shown up to be frauds in Gupta s didactic manual aimed at improving middle class women The miracles of these soothsayers are shown to be based on simple scientific chemical reactions which an educated woman can be taught to see through (S Gupta 1954 635–76) Rather than depend on these unreliable and ultimately greedy religious intermediaries the middle class Hindu woman is taught that religion consists of simply worshipping God in her own home and not entangling herself in the webs of deceit of spirits demons and possession (ibid 678) Similarly the book tries to educate women in the true significance of religious festivals so as to allow them to avoid the false rituals the superstitious keeping of fasts and enjoy the true significance of festivals (ibid 709) While the ultimate true significance of these festivals is not really explained the moral of the story appears to be that a woman s true religion consists in following *stridharma* (literally a woman s religion/duties effectively a religion of domesticity) and for that she has no need of either religious specialists or indeed to participate in fairs festivals or other public rituals

Like contemporaneous movements among the Sikhs and those led by middle class Muslims many of the innovations coming from middle class Hindus at this time consisted in drawing boundaries between religions At the level of religious practice for instance it was common for Hindus and particularly women, to seek boons and blessings at the shrine.

of *pirs* or renowned holy men This form of popular worship which often cut across caste class sectarian and religious boundaries was unacceptable to middle class reformers in whose understanding shaped as it was by the colonial context such acts were irreligious Like the Singh Sabha activists in Punjab (Oberoi 1994) reformers like Sannulal Gupta also took it upon themselves to wipe out syncretic religious practices among Hindus *Strisubodhini* accordingly contains a major diatribe against worshipping at Muslim pirs tombs where the text seeks to invoke fear (such worship may make women barren) as well as castigating such worship for demonstrating a disrespect for one s own religion because the shrines of Muslim pirs glorified individuals who were responsible for killing many Hindu men (S Gupta 1954 643–5)

There is no doubt that there had always been a considerable difference between elite and popular conceptions of religion in north India as elsewhere in the world It is equally true that elite views of religion have always exercised considerably more cultural and political power in society What was radically different this time as opposed to earlier such attempts however was that the power of a superordinate group was coming from its ability to appropriate and then claim to represent popular sentiments It was because Dar had better access to public sphere institutions like publishing and the press and a better understanding of the norms of colonial politics that someone like him could overwhelm the voices of the Azamgarh peasantry Even more significantly it was because power in this public sphere came from representing religious communities that activists like Dar were driven to such projects in the first place

Yet to be represented communities had first to be defined Such definitions too came filtered through the sensibilities and agenda of middle class activists Though many of the changes initiated by reformers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were couched in terms of rediscoveries of eternal truths about Hindu dharma there can be little doubt that such innovations were recasting if not reinventing religious traditions This new Hindu religiosity not only allowed greater facility in constructing bounded religious communities to represent but also the opportunity of greater social control through the power or authority to define what did or did not constitute appropriate religious practice Therefore this period also saw the emergence of new middle class notions of religiosity where religion was separated from superstition became more rational and more amenable to the sensibilities of the middle class educated men and of course to their public sphere projects as well Moreover in contrast to the religion of domesticity advocated for women

male religiosity was constantly exhorted towards and indeed defined by publicity

The most striking aspect of the discourse of middle class religiosity that emerged in the public sphere of late nineteenth and early twentieth century India was its apparently indispensable proximity semantic as well as political to the notion of community Middle class activists appeared unable to articulate their religiosity in any other terms except with reference to religious communities This was certainly the case with lay activists but also it seems religious specialists like Rama Tirtha Not surprisingly then an important theme of the new Hindu religiosity was its emphasis on unity and criticism of all that threatened to divide the community The foremost among the vast variety of social cultural and devotional practices which needed to be tamed and disciplined to produce the new Hindu religiosity was of course caste Based on the principle of hierarchy (Dumont 1970a) caste practices such as untouchability and the interdiction on commensality and other forms of interaction between different castes were the biggest obstacles to the realization of the sort of unity desired by public sphere activists in colonial Lucknow Thus there were attempts to prove that the sort of rigid caste boundaries which prohibited interaction were not a part of true Hindu religion Rama Tirtha made the criticism of caste and religious or regional sectarianism a central motif of his writing (Puran Singh 1974 221 Rama Tirtha 1982 42) In fact he attributed the decline of Indian civilization, the weakness of India itself to the growing narrowness and divisions which beset Indian society caught in distinctions of caste and religion we have become separated from each other and hence weak' (Rama Tirtha 1982 102)

The reformist Arya Samaj was the most prominent exponent of the new theories about caste [5] But even when lecturing on behalf of the *Sanatan Dharma Sabha* well before he took sanyas Tirath Ram presented an interpretation of caste that was completely at odds with orthodox brahmanical precepts A true Sanatan Dharmite he said must not observe any discrimination against anybody For him there is no differ

[5] Accepted wisdom has it that the Sanatan Dharma Sabhas came about to preserve the eternal (*sanatan*) religion and brahmanical orthopraxy against the revisionism of the Arya Samaj Clearly though the S tananis were not a homogeneous lot Tirath Rama, before he became Swami Rama Tirtha was an active member of the Sanatan Dharma Sabha Sialkot Punjab yet his ideas demonstrate little of brahmanical orthodoxy in his interpretation of caste relations For the ideology of the Arya Samaj and the emergence of the Sanatan Dharma Sabhas see Kenneth W Jones 1989 For a history of the Arya Samaj from within Satyaketu Vidyalankar and Handut Vedal[illegible] 1984

entiation between the rich and the poor high and low and a Brahmin and Shudra (Rama Tirtha n d) As a sanyasi Rama Tirtha later elaborated on this reinterpretation of the caste system He insisted that the caste system *as it existed* did not conform to shastric ideals An originally harmonious system of division of labour he said over a period of time became stultified ossified mummified or petrified (Sharga 1968 146) The modernity and the context of Rama Tirtha s interpretation were most evident in his critique of the *Manusmriti* This fourth century canonical text which most explicitly and unabashedly sets out caste and gender hierarchies and prescribes severe punishments for transgressions was taken to task because instead of serving the people the *Manusmriti* acted as a despotic tyrant (ibid)

Yet there were important limits to this new publicized religiosity and nothing shows up these limitations better than the vexed issue of caste Despite the theoretical rejection of caste by reformers and a section of the intellectuals for many middle class men upper caste status was an important marker of their social respectability and their distance from the lower classes and castes For this reason among others there were many who publicly affirmed their belief in maintaining the traditional hierarchical ordering of society and derided the efforts of the modernists Shivanath Sharma for instance decried the changes that were leading radicals of his time to reject the distinctions between castes The world is changing he wrote disapprovingly in one of his satires notions of purity and pollution that used to constitute the epitome of respectable conduct are now perceived as the height of absurdity (Shivanath Sharma 1927 206) But Sharma was an acknowledged conservative a man of the old light who lampooned most efforts at social reform (see Chapters One and Two above) Though he often bemoaned the decline of the Hindu *jati* he was evidently seeking to reinvigorate a Hindu society in which the old rules of caste and gender hierarchies would be reinforced (Shivanath Sharma 1927 and most issues of *Anand*)

It was the position of progressives the men whose ideas approximated those of Rama Tirtha and other patriotic sanyasis who denied that caste was a real part of Hinduism or sought to reform the institution regardless which is more interesting The founder of the Arya Samaj Dayanand Saraswati advocated a new Hindu revivalism that rejected notions of hereditary caste privilege or disability (Jones 1989 33) Dayanand s position on caste was not without its ambiguities (Malhotra 1998) But more interesting for our purpose is the writing of the upper caste followers of the Samaj in north India Sannulal Gupta s book show him to be a great supporter of the Arya Samaj The introduction tc

Strisubodhini begins by extolling the virtues of the Arya Samaj activities in the fictional and unnamed town where his didactic story is set The Samaj he says worked hard to bring Hindus back to the fold of their eternal (Sanatan) Vedic religion Thanks to the work of the Samaj Gupta tells us not only did English educated people not embrace Christianity but even Muslims and Christians left their own faiths to respect and embrace the Sanatan Aryadharma (Gupta 1954 2–3)

Yet Gupta s book demonstrates how the attempts at constructing a religious tradition that would be rational modern and inclusive were often undermined by very traditional ideas of separation and hierarchy that were equally part of the way Sanatan Aryadharma was imagined by him When criticizing the superstitious practice of worshipping at the shrines of local pirs or holy men for boons Gupta reveals the limits of his imagination of the category of Hindu The most convincing reason he can offer to dissuade women from worshipping un Hindu pirs is to point to the low caste origins of these saints Isn t it a matter of shame he asks that even though we are high born (*uchha kul*) we worship a base born person? Fold our hands prostrate ourselves and ask for his blessings? (S Gupta 1954 645) Worshipping these saints he points out is to worship *Chamars* (an untouchable caste) and even worse *Bhangis* (scavengers even lower on the caste scale) Ram! Ram! writes this Arya Samaj supporter, have we Aryas become so *irreligious and back ward* that we should fold our hands to and worship Bhangis Chamars Koilis Chandalas etc (ibid 647 emphasis added) Clearly neither the religion nor the progress that Gupta or his ilk were seeking to con struct in colonial India included any association with the lower castes Rama Tirtha s fond hopes were evidently at odds with the sentiments and practices of many of the people he addressed The new religiosity of the middle class imagination revealed fissures almost at the moment of its creation

By the 1920s caste issues were very much at the forefront of political debate in nationalist circles This was also the time when an assertive Hindu nationalism building on the templates of a new religiosity was seeking to play a larger role in political affairs by championing the rights of a Hindu political community (see Chapter Four, below) To success fully represent the rights of Hindus and create a stronger more asser tive Hindu self in colonial north India it was crucial to the project of Hindu publicists in the 1920s to reiterate at least rhetorically the no tion of a single Hindu community For instance there were many highly charged emotional articles in support of Untouchable temple entry in the prominent Hindi journal of Lucknow *Madhuri* at this time One of

these compared the Untouchables situation with children prevented from embracing their father (*Madhuri* April 1925 564–6) Yet much like the earlier efforts of people like Dar to represent a single Hindu community the Hindu nationalism of the 1920s also betrayed its limitations as a project of upper caste middle class empowerment

Caste was not only an integral part of brahmanical Hindu religious discourse but also an important part of the privileges enjoyed by the upper caste men There should be little surprise then that caste practices always sat uneasily with representations of a homogeneous Hindu community This became one arena where the limits of the modern Hindu religiosity stood revealed most clearly Immediately after an impassioned plea on behalf of allowing Untouchables temple entry *Madhuri* for instance warned against taking such reformism too far While it was important to recognize certain Hindu birthrights *Madhuri* argued showing Untouchables *more compassion than was necessary* would only divide Hindu society and therefore harm the Hindu movement To teach Shudras and Untouchables the Vedas wear the sacred thread or to eat with them was considered inappropriate and irreligious by the majority of Hindus *Madhuri* argued Insisting on such practices would only alienate orthodox Hindus and hence harm Hindu society as a whole (*Madhuri* April 1925 564–6) On an earlier occasion *Madhuri* s upper caste editors Rup Narayan Pandey and Dularelal Bhargava criticized the Hindu Sabha of Sirajganj in Bengal for forcing members to eat a meal cooked by Untouchables Their objections were expressed through a rhetorical question they posed asking if the natural and bodily impurity which made such *jatis* untouchable in the first place [had] disappeared all of a sudden? The Hindu Sabha the journal said should be an organization which a Hindu of any caste or sect should feel is his own (*Madhuri* September 1924 275) However much the editors may have liked to believe otherwise fault lines based on caste and class not only limited the Hindu Sabha members but the very imagination of a modern publicized Hindu religiosity

There can be little doubt that middle class interventions transformed the nature of Hindu religiosity in the late nineteenth century Even though religion in India had seldom been divorced from issues of politics and power the innovations in religious thought and attempts to discipline practices that occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries evidently reflected the concerns and outlook of the middle class activists who took such a prominent role in propagating these ideas Middle class Hindu religiosity was not however a completely new invention rather it represented a new development in the Hindu tradition

Clearly men like Vivekananda or Rama Tirtha drew upon a very old Vedantic tradition in the ideas they preached What makes them significant cultural entrepreneurs of their time is however the fact that they did not allow these traditions to restrict their concerns with the world Rama Tirtha s injunction to reject even Vedantic ideas if they did not make one strong is one example of this In other ways too men like Rama Tirtha did not allow themselves to be restricted by tradition Rama Tirtha for instance took the very unusual step of initiating himself as an ascetic rather than accept the discipline of any one of the established ascetic orders or even have a teacher or preceptor initiate him as a sanyasi (Sharga 1968 188) Rama Tirtha may not have been the first person to initiate himself as a sanyasi Certainly middle class religiosity of the late nineteenth century was not the first time that people speaking broadly within the Hindu ambit had dissented from or criticized existing social and cultural traditions including the ideas and institutions of caste society At the same time the sort of critical reformulation of religious ideas that was taking place in colonial India represented significant departures from existing traditions

There was for instance a tradition of public scholastic debate within Hindu traditions but such debates *shastrathas* had for most part been in Sanskrit and these too usually remained confined to relatively small and local audiences Also while religious teachers and the religious orders they established probably always sought to gather larger numbers of followers these too were usually confined to fairly limited geographical areas (van der Veer 1994 n d) The attempt to fashion address and mobilize a singular imagined Hindu community in the nineteenth century was a unique attempt one which reflected the concerns of the middle class and also the new possibilities that were open to them in the colonial public sphere [6] These attempts no doubt reflected the influence of colonial categories and a new epistemology too But middle class concerns prominently shaped the nature of a new publicized Hinduism which was constituted through public sphere institutions concerned with mobilizing a Hindu public and claimed to exist for the cause of public service

[6] Access to printing presses for one allowed a wider dissemination (and no doubt contestation too) of new ideas about religion and appropriate religious practices After the death of Rama Tirtha for instance his disciple Narain Swami decided that the most fitting memorial for his spiritual mentor was to establish a Rama Tirtha Publication League which later became the Swami Rama Tirtha Pratishthan and undertook the task of publishing and disseminating the message of his mentor to the largest possible audience (Swami Rama Tirtha Pratishthan 1975 26)

The reconstitution and disciplining of Hinduism was above all a cultural political project which represented the ideas and interests of an ultimately small part of the population It was moreover a project that was shot through with internal contradictions Despite its limitations this was a powerful development enabling as well as limiting a variety of political and cultural initiatives in the public sphere As an ideological construct publicized religiosity allowed the public sphere activists to construct and represent a unified Hindu community and thus enabled a larger more influential role for them in north Indian society and politics But probably the most significant contribution of the modern, publicized religiosity was that it created a set of discursive templates for the deployment of religion in the public sphere Emphasizing the novel idea of a Hindu *community* the new Hindu religiosity sought to deny most of what divided this putative community as false religion or later degenerations which needed correction Once lived religious practices with a multiplicity of traditions were either so characterized or subsumed as inferior versions of an authentic monolithic religious tradition then this publicized religiosity could be deployed in the public sphere for a variety of endeavours

DEPLOYING RELIGIOSITY

Tamed Hindu religiosity liberated from specific contexts and practices could and was deployed in different ways as part of many political projects and in many sorts of discourses The varieties of explicitly nationalist projects were the most obvious of these Having consigned caste and other inconvenient features of lived Hinduism to the realms of false religion and emphasized the pristine purity of Advaita Vedantism Rama Tirtha and the more famous Vivekananda deployed the new religiosity to impress upon foreign and native audiences the glories of Hinduism It was equally necessary for caste and other parochial aspects to be defined as historical accretions upon a true Hindu essence before India s first President and philosopher S Radhakrishnan could claim that Vedanta is not a religion but religion itself in its most universal and deepest significance (Radhakrishnan cited in van der Veer 1994 68) A variety of hierarchical precepts reinforcing caste and gender distinctions and a significant history of sectarian conflicts within and between groups of rival Hindu religious specialists and ascetics needed to be marginalized suppressed or subsumed by this new notion of Hindu religiosity before Gandhi could define non violence as one of the essential virtues of Hinduism (Gandhi 1995 8) On the other hand, political

activists like Bishan Narain Dar were not so concerned with the history and philosophy of Hinduism But even for him to be able to appropriate subaltern religiosity in the name of representing the rights of a Hindu community against the meddling of the colonial state it was necessary to have the idea of a Hindu community free of divisions whose rights were to be defended by middle class activists like himself

Such constructions of the Hindu community as we saw in the case of Bishan Narain Dar and the cow protection movement opened up possibilities of enunciating an anti Muslim position even if it was not the intention of men like Dar to do so Dar was far from being a simple Hindu chauvinist The adversarial other of the Hindus in Dar s report was not the Muslim, but the English officials and perhaps realizing the import of his writing Dar included a very long section in his report on the Azamgarh riots exhibiting his appreciation of Muslim history and culture and the contributions of Muslim rulers of India Dar particularly attacked the stereotype of the bigoted Muslim In the day of their power Dar wrote they tolerated our prejudices is it to be supposed that now when they have fallen from their former eminence they would cease to be tolerant? He stressed natural affinities of the two communities calling Muslims the bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh even as he criticized official incompetence and the desire to rule by creating divisions between Hindus and Muslims (Dar 1893 23) Despite his protestations to the contrary however defending the rights of a Hindu community and celebrating Hindu manliness did lead Bishan Narain to celebrate the massacre of Muslim villagers by cow–protection activists in Azamgarh

Abiding faith in liberal values and commitment to the politics of nation building may have led Bishan Narain Dar to emphasize even in his celebration of Hindu might shared aspects of the history and culture of Hindus and Muslims In other contexts however the cultural politics of Hindu assertiveness could and was used to construct a much less plural vision of the nation underscoring Hindu superiority while compelling Muslims to recognize their status as the vanquished rulers The publicization of Hindu religion contributed to the creation of an assertive Hindu identity The discourse of Hindu militancy in the 1920s accompanying *shuddhi* (purification) and *sangathan* (unity) movement too sought to defend Hindu rights In the different context however this defence of Hindu rights was accompanied by an aggressive and explicitly anti Muslim rhetoric of Hindu nationhood Thus aggressive Hindu nationalism also drew upon the templates of middle class modernized Hinduism celebrating a real Hinduism not divided by caste class language or region as the ideological basis for a Hindu community it sought

to represent A rhetoric of community and solidarity rather than hierarchy as the characteristic of a modern Hinduism is equally necessary in order for the middle class proponents of Hindutva today when they tear down mosques or carry out systematic pogroms of Muslims in the name of restoring Hindu pride

Nevertheless it was not just the revivalists who deployed a publicized religiosity to further their agenda Intellectuals and political and religious leaders representing the rights of middle peasant communities drew upon and transformed Vaishnavite traditions in their efforts at greater empowerment through asserting a higher caste status William Pinch in his study of peasants and monastic institutions in north India highlights the role of monks of the Ramanandi *sampradaya* (sect is an inadequate translation) and of what he terms Vaishnavite egalitarianism in the fashioning of middle peasant claims for personal and community dignity (Pinch 1996a 81) There are however clear parallels in the strategies used for articulating such assertions of higher caste status and those used to deny the importance of caste by upper caste activists like Rama Tirtha and Vivekananda Though Pinch sees the sampradaya as a whole active in the process of caste re identification and traces the origins of such ideas to an unchanging Vaishnavite egalitarianism the author himself submits that a new educated elite provided the organizational frame for the status claims among communities formerly identified as servile (ibid 89) It emerges from the sources Pinch uses that it was these well educated middle class activists who were evidently involved in the redefinition of religiosity to support claims for an upper caste Khshatriya identity for the communities conventionally classified as servile Shudras

Bhagwan Prasad who first wrote a biography of Ramanand emphasizing his disdain for caste practices was a well to do Kayastha and was employed as a sub inspector of schools (ibid 73) Lala Sitaram who had been given the title of Rai Sahib by the state wrote to Grierson of the famous linguistic survey insisting that among the Ramanandis Sudras of all classes are as freely admitted and invested with the sacred thread as the twice born (ibid 76) Despite Pinch s argument that the movements represented subaltern peasant concerns about status and operated completely independent of nationalism (ibid 6) the voices he recounts tell a story closer to other middle class concerns A collection of Ramanandi writings of the 1930s has Bhagvatacharya a Ramanandi monk refer to Ramanand—the fourteenth century saint to whom the order traced its ancestry—attracting a large number of disciples so that he could through them cleanse *Bharat* [India] all at once

Like Rama Tirtha or Vivekananda activists of the caste associations or the Ramanandi order clearly drew upon an existing religious tradition to forward their agenda but in the process also transformed it to suit their concerns Like the other reinterpretations such politics of empowerment too had its victims In this case assertions of an upper caste identity severely circumscribed the role of the women of middle peasant communities who had traditionally been much freer Gangaprasad whom Pinch cites as a major ideologue of Kushvaha Kshatriya hood was also a translator of the Victorian romances of George WM Reynolds and used them to evoke and reinforce images of sacrificing wives (Pinch 1996a 126) We could also perhaps trace one part of the history of ongoing tension between Dalit (former Untouchable groups) and middle peasant communities so prevalent in contemporary north Indian politics to this strategy of upward mobility adopted by middle peasant communities Moreover, assertions of Kshatriya status in the public sphere certainly led to some middle peasant communities blaming their decline on the Muslim invaders thus occasionally bringing strands of the movement into the ambit of anti Muslim Hindu nationalist politics as well (ibid 71–2 and Conclusion)

What is even more telling than this case however, is the way in which discursive templates that structure the discourse of Hindu nationalism, also underpin large parts of the most liberal and secular discourse of Indian nationalism Jawaharlal Nehru is almost universally regarded as a quintessential modernist His rationalism belief in the progressive impact of western science and technology and heavy industry have often led to unfavourable comparisons with Gandhi, the indigenous critic of modern industrial society (S Chandra 1992 6–10) In the India of the 1990s moreover Nehru s name has also been inextricably linked with the notion of secularism Radical and right wing Hindu critics alike allege that 'Nehruvian secularism which ignored the religious sensibilities of the majority of India s population, lies at the root of many of the problems besetting the Indian polity Nehru s own disdain for superstitious practices and dogmatic beliefs and his rejection of religion because its method of approach to life s problems was not that of science on the surface appears to reinforce the image of Nehru the modern secularist (Nehru 1946 13–14) What is surprising, therefore is to note the extent to which Nehru s discourse too is informed by modern publicized Hindu religiosity as he recounts his *Discovery of India*

One reason why Nehru could not unequivocally celebrate the Indian past was because that past contained much that was evidently unsuitable for a progressive modern, nation state Yet that past needed to be

appropriated made available to the project of the modern nation How then were hierarchical and non modern institutions and ideas so much a part of that history to be accounted for? How was Nehru to square his dislike for non scientific superstition and dogma of religion with the necessity of celebrating taking pride in a past which so evidently consisted of much that was religious? Nehru s resolution was very much in the discursive pattern established by men like Rama Tirtha or Vivekananda Expressing his admiration for the vitality of the Vedas the spirit of enquiry and philosophical insights of the Upanishads (Nehru 1946 78–95) Nehru celebrates the rational spirit of enquiry, so evident in ancient times which he adds might well have led to the further growth of science but then notes a historical and intellectual decline when such a spirit of enquiry is replaced with orthodox orthoprax religion an irrationalism and a blind idolatry of the past It is then that Indian life becomes a sluggish stream living in the past' (ibid 47) It is this degeneration of an authentic tradition that leads to the sort of superstition and dogma that Nehru associates with religion that petrifies a system of reasonable division of labour and a mechanism of group solidarity into the contemporary caste system (ibid 284–95)

In common with much of nationalist writing Nehru exhibits what has variously been described as the 'aporia or the Janus faced character of nationalism asserting simultaneously the objective modernity and the subjective antiquity of the Indian nation (Nairn 1975 Anderson 1983 Duara 1995) The tension between the two is never quite resolved as this rather extended quotation would bear out

> India must break with much of her past and not allow it to dominate the present Our lives are encumbered with the dead wood of this past all that is dead and has served its purpose has to go But that does not mean a break with or forgetting of the vital and life giving in that past We can never forget the ideals that have moved our race the dreams of the Indian people through the ages the wisdom of the ancients nor can we forget the myriad experiences which have built up our ancient race and lie embedded in our subconscious minds We will never forget them or cease to take pride in that noble heritage of ours If India forgets them she will no longer remain India and much that has made her our joy and pride will cease to be

The only way that Nehru could appropriate history to the Indian nation was to fall back on notions almost identical to those of a real Hinduism which were deployed by the middle class activists of the nineteenth century What India needed therefore was not to reject the vital and life giving past but break w th

all the dust and dirt of the ages that have covered her up and hidden her inner beauty and significance the excrescences and abortions that have petrified her spirit set it in rigid frames and stunted her growth We have to cut away these excrescences and remember afresh the core of that ancient wisdom (Nehru 1946 620)

A tamed disciplined religious heritage unencumbered by the dust and dirt of the ages was the essence of Nehru s wisdom of the ancients Such a heritage liberated from lived practices as well as a host of hierarchical and non modern notions could be polished selectively appropriated to serve as a glorious and untarnished resource available to the emerging Indian nation Ironically, therefore it is the discursive strategies established through publicizing religiosity that allow Nehru the arch secularist to detach religious ideas from their contexts from religion itself as he understands the term Nehru can thus celebrate the wisdom of the ancients their spirit of enquiry while condemning the rest as the dust and dirt' as excrescences and abortions which constitute the religion he can then heartily condemn

CONCLUSION

Though this chapter has focused on the publicization of Hindu religiosity and that too mostly by Lucknow based middle class activists the sort of reinterpretations of religion it describes does have parallels with similar movements around the same time Harjot Oberoi thoroughly documents the processes by which an educated elite in Punjab transformed the Sikh tradition to produce a distinct and modern Khalsa Sikh identity (Oberoi 1994) There are also parallels with the emergence of a modern Muslim identity in colonial India A much more clearly enunciated religious tradition however, in addition to the presence of a long established, and a powerful ulama (literally the learned in practice the word refers to the Islamic clergy) makes the history of republicization of Islam in colonial India somewhat different from the Hindu one Farzana Sheikh for instance argues that Islamic values played a crucial role in shaping the sort of political choices made by Indian Muslims in the colonial era (Sheikh 1989) Which is not to say of course that Islamic traditions remained unchanged as they were brought to play a role in public sphere politics Sir Syed Ahmad Khan earned the sobriquet of Nechari and much abuse for presenting a thoroughly modernist reading of Islamic teachings (Lelyveld 1978 also Robinson 1993 109) Gregory Kozlowski s work admirably demonstrates how Muslim middle class activists completely transformed the meanings of the Islamic institution of

waqf while in pursuit of their political ambitions (Kozlowski 1985)

Religious ideas have always changed in accordance with changing contexts This chapter has outlined the central role of middle class activists in producing a new Hindu religiosity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in colonial India Like other middle class projects their religiosity too drew upon and transformed a variety of old and new traditions to produce fundamentally new conceptions of public identities Liberated from specific devotional beliefs social and cultural practices and detached from the world views from which they emerged this publicized religiosity was easily deployed for a variety of projects that worked to further middle class empowerment Control over institutions of the public sphere meant that unlike analogous movements in the past middle class reinterpretations had more far reaching implications With such control the middle class could with some degree of success seek to universalize its reinterpretations of Hindu religiosity as the norm This middle class religiosity changed the political culture of modern India as it assisted in the articulation of a variety of modern political identities seeking to mobilize communities based on caste religion or the nation

Yet as we saw from the example of the Lucknow publicists there were significant class and caste limitations to the project of creating a singular Hindu community Particularly on the issue of caste middle class activists appeared to be calling for both transcending and reaffirming caste distinctions This can of course be interpreted as sheer duplicity on the part of upper caste activists who wanted their cake and eat it too But to read their efforts simply as attempts at deception would for one involve questions about the integrity of men who in all likelihood believed they were acting with altruistic motives We really have no basis for making such judgements Moreover to do so would be extremely superficial historiography There is no historical justification to conclude that Bishan Narain Dar went to Azamgarh with the real agenda of undermining the religious sensibilities of the peasants there even while claiming to represent the Hindu community Nor is it reasonable to imagine that the editors of *Madhuri* were simply upper caste bigots who put on a façade of liberality while writing some articles in the journal but allowed their true feelings to surface in some pieces The limitations in the middle class attempts to create a new Hinduism are better understood in more complex terms and traced to contradictions that were more fundamental to such middle class projects

The new religiosity constructed by middle class activists through their public sphere projects has to be recognized as an effort at empowerment

Empowerment in this context (as in most) not only involves the aggregation of power as against a more powerful force but also over others In this case there is little doubt that the middle class concern with religion was driven by concerns of empowering itself *vis a vis* the colonial state That is a factor which has been well studied by Partha Chatterjee and others This chapter has chosen to focus on how this new religiosity also empowered the middle class over other social groups As in empowering strategy however, this new religiosity was shaped by contrary pulls Even though it was important for middle class empowerment to fashion a new Hindu religiosity transcending the dividing potential of caste the privileges they enjoyed as upper caste men offered other possibilities of exercising power over subordinate social groups They could not therefore completely abandon the valorization of upper caste status even as they were trying to construct a new publicized Hindu community in the public sphere The modern in this case was built on the traditional and could not erase it revealing yet another instance of the fractured modernity created in colonial India

Religion as a category has had a long and troubled history and not only in colonial India (Asad 1993) Religion was the basis on which Orientalist scholarship othered India to establish both the incapacity of Indians to rule themselves and reaffirm the rationality of the West (Inden 1990) Modern nationalists also had a highly ambiguous relationship with religion as Nehru s writing clearly shows More recently religion has become a resource for academic critiques of modernity. Scholars have found in the presence of religion in politics a position from which to critique the universalist claims of western modernity (Chakrabarty 1992a Chatterjee 1993 Nandy 1990) This is of course a valuable critique both to show the limits of modern history and to push all historians towards an understanding of the past that does not simply universalize the history of Europe (Chakrabarty 1992) One wonders however if the best way of doing this is indeed to reaffirm religion as something outside of modernity At a time when religious chauvinism is on the rise there is for one a danger of unwittingly reinforcing a very different (and extremely modern) vision of religiosity (S Sarkar 1997) Moreover, this is a conception of religion that reaffirms the Orientalist vision of religion as the essence of the non modern In contrast understanding religion as a product (and to a great extent a producer) of a certain kind of modernity a fractured modernity allows us to better understand both the past and the present The contrary pulls of a historical context produced a discourse of Hindu religiosity which could then be deployed in a variety of ways in colonial India

An important point this chapter tries to demonstrate is that the discourse of publicized religiosity continues to underpin even the later and more explicitly secular discourse of modern nationhood In contemporary India a large variety of arguments about the connections between religion and politics continue to be framed by the discourse of publicized religiosity The advocates of an outright separation of religion and politics the followers of Nehru as much as those propagating Hindutva draw on this discursive framing to justify their positions as indeed do liberal Hindu arguments stressing the tolerant nature of Hinduism which claim that fundamentalism is alien to the essences of Hinduism (Nandy 1990) As it did for their counterparts from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century the discourse of publicized religiosity today allows for the simultaneous avowal of contrary positions Drawing on this resource the Hindutva proponent simultaneously calls for a *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu nation) and *Akhand Bharat* (a united Indian subcontinent) and middle class Hindus advocate a secular and a Hindu India How this contradictory legacy actually plays out in a specific political context what it enabled and how it limited the political projects of the middle class is the subject of the next chapter

FOUR

Impermanent Identities Limits of Middle-class Nationalisms

This chapter points to the possibilities limits and fractures of the middle class nationalist imagination in north India during the first three decades of the twentieth century Most nationalist ideologies accommodate contradictory elements within the same framework (Anderson 1983 Nairn 1975 Duara 1995) One form this disjuncture took in India was in the middle class simultaneously imagining the nation as above religious differences and yet at the same time also as constituted by them Examining the politics of the Hindu middle class groups in Lucknow in the 1920s reveals a constant oscillation between support for plural secular nationalism and an anti Muslim Hindu nationalist identity This chapter traces this duality in middle class politics both to immediate and changing political contexts and more broadly to contradictions inherent in the constitution of this social class

To some extent the publicization of religion, and the deploying of a publicized religiosity discussed in the previous chapter allowed for this simultaneous and contradictory imagination Yet to leave our analysis at this point ignores the importance of historical context in such imaginations and cannot account for the major shift in the discourse of Hindu nationalism in the 1920s when it took on a stridently anti Muslim character. As much as this newer more aggressive Hindu nationalism built on the legacy of a publicized religiosity the political discourse of the 1920s was also very much a product of a different set of political imperatives and the opening of new possibilities of middle class empowerment To understand both how the Hindu nationalism of the 1920s was in many ways a phenomenon distinct from that of the late 1800s yet a victim of similar dualities requires a closer examination of politics in a specific location in this case the contrary pulls constituting middle class politic in colonial Lucknow

The recent growth in support for Hindu nationalist ideas in India has

made scholars more aware of the close proximity of religious and secular nationalist discourses in colonial India The clear separation between nationalism and communalism that was possible a generation ago (for example B Chandra 1979) is difficult to sustain in light of contemporary political scenarios since the early 1990s Some have sought to understand this development chronologically Gyanendra Pandey for instance argues that while nineteenth century nationalists saw the nation as composed of different religiously defined communities after the 1920s Congress nationalists began to clearly distinguish between their own nationalism and the communalism of its challengers (Pandey 1990) Pandey s formulation however overlooks the significant ambivalence and slippage between these two positions which continued to characterize Congress and middle class politics in general well after the 1920s Another approach has been to trace an exclusive history of the Hindu Right as an ideology distinct from the mainstream of bourgeois politics (Basu et al 1993 A Sen 1993) In a recent article Sumit Sarkar has made an argument for distinguishing between the ideologies of Indian nationalism and Hindu communalism even while recognizing that this distinction is precise in logic but far less so in practice (S Sarkar 1997 363) In Lucknow as this chapter reveals the same men the same journals and in close proximity of time, occupied both secularist' and communal positions

This chapter explores the basis of both communal and secular nationalisms among Hindu middle class activists in colonial Lucknow Tracing the emergence of middle class Hindu nationalism through the twentieth century the first section demonstrates ways in which this discourse both built upon yet was distinct from the agenda of nineteenth century Hindu nationalists like Bishan Narain Dar or Rama Tirtha The second section points to the reasons why in certain contexts the same middle class activists simultaneous with their assertion of militant Hindu assertiveness also enthusiastically advocated a nationalism above parochial or communal solidarities Closely examining the discourse of militant Hindu nationalism the last section argues that contradictions inherent in the middle class agenda pulled them in different directions thus necessitating the simultaneous avowal of contradictory ideas Examining the roots of the enthusiasm as well as the ambivalence that marks middle class participation in nationalist projects this chapter outlines some of the reasons why middle class nationalism produced political identities that were protean and impermanent and points to the limits of the modern politics initiated by the middle class in colonial north India A close examination of the texts produced by the middle class nationalists of course figures prominently in such an exercise Equally significant for

an understanding of both the possibility and the limits of middle class nationalism is however a clear understanding of the changed and changing contexts in which such ideological shifts were occurring

It was from the 1920s that the Indian National Congress as an organization began to consistently represent the nation as an entity which stood above less salient divisions of community caste class or gender Such rhetorical strategies combined with a growing political weight allowed the Congress to then label other competing visions of nation parochial communal or even anti national (Pandey 1990) However successful this strategy has been over time its adoption points to the presence and importance of other visions of the nation distinct from that of the Congress The most significant of these was the ideology of Muslim nationalism In Lucknow the presence of a strong Muslim political and religious leadership and one whom the administration appeared to be favouring from the early years of the twentieth century did create problems for the Congress Though Lucknow was not a centre of Hindu revivalist politics in the United Provinces neither was it the idyllic paradise of Hindu–Muslim unity as some commentators have liked to imagine In fact there was a particular edge to Hindu politics in a city commonly regarded as a stronghold of Muslims Close attention to the rhetoric and political strategies adopted by Hindu middle class activists of Lucknow connected with the Congress during this period reveals a much more fragmented and fissured imagination of the nation than latter day nationalist histories would submit Among Hindu middle class activists the boundaries between the new secular imagination of the nation and the more parochial or communal vision of the nation as constituted by religious communities were blurred and overlapping

The success of the Indian National Congress in narrating the history of modern India as the story of its own success is based on the massive expansion in the extent of popular participation in the Congress movement and a consequent increase in its ability to influence policies of the colonial state during the 1920s In Lucknow as in other parts of India the agitation against the partition of Bengal and the work of the Home Rule Leagues began the process of changing the character of the political opposition offered by the Indian National Congress [1] It was after 1919 however, with the launch of the first non cooperation movement and the alliance forged with the agitation among Muslims to protect the Caliphate in Turkey (the Khilafat movement) that the Congress became a major force in the politics of colonial India Gandhian techniques of *satyagraha*

[1] UP GAD Proceedings March 1918, 12 n UP GAD file no 214 (UPSA)

(truth force) and *ahimsa* (non violence) and his charismatic presence as well as tactical acumen were able to draw people in massive numbers from social strata which had never before been mobilized for nationalist politics in colonial north India Gandhi s unilateral decision to call off the movement in the wake of violence against policemen at Chauri Chaura led to many problems including disaffection among Muslim leadership and splits within the Congress party There was for instance the split between the Swarajists who now favoured returning to participate in elected legislative bodies and No Changers who preferred to follow Gandhi s call to renounce such forums in favour of working on rural con structive and reform programmes This period also saw a massive increase in the number of riots between Hindus and Muslims across towns in north India (S Sarkar 1983b 226–8 231–6) Nationalist politics revived after 1927–8 with the revival of agitational politics over the issue of boycotting the all white Statutory Commission headed by Sir John Simon Lucknow Congressmen organized spectacular public demonstrations against the Simon Commission defying prohibitions of the administration and used imaginative ways to convey their message at an outdoor dinner feting the Commission by flying kites with the message of Simon Go Back and then dropping the kites in the midst of the celebrations (Bhartiya 1961) Gandhi s decision to take up the issue of salt as the basis of his satyagraha campaign in 1930 also evoked a great deal of popular support for the Congress programme in Lucknow and included women and students But this second round of mass mobilization probably did not have the same level of participation by subaltern groups or apparently by Lucknow s Muslims as compared to 1920–2 [2]

If nationalist historians in India have retold its past as the story of the Indian nation the creation of Pakistan created yet another nationalist history in the subcontinent which reduces the richness of a variety of politics to a narrative tracing the emergence of Pakistan.[3] Lucknow fig ures prominently in the history of Muslim separatism as well (see Robinson 1993) Even an exclusive focus on high politics of the first four decades of the century clearly reveals that this period saw much more than simply the development of Muslim separatism or the belief that India was

[2] Bharatiya (1961) has lists of those arrested during the non cooperation and Khilafat move ments and during the Salt Satyagraha of 1930 The latter list has fewer Muslim names

[3] To cite just one example Abdul Halim Sharar who had expressed his dissatisfaction at squabbles between Hindus and Muslims in north India in an editorial he wrote for his journal *Muhazzib* in 1890 is credited as having first articulated the idea of Pakistan (*Muhazzib* 23 August 1890 cited in Bilgrami 1970 iv) Pirzada 1968 also cites this article as part of sec ion on the genesis of Pakistan.

composed of two nations —Muslims and Hindus (Roy 1990) Of course Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan had opposed the Indian National Congress from its inception but his opposition was to the Congress demands for representative government which he believed would lead to potential overlordship of the Bengali babu and work against the interests of the Ashraf Muslim gentry he represented Sir Sayyid found supporters among Muslims and Hindus of Lucknow for his views and in the city drew more vociferous criticism from orthodox Muslims than from middle class Hindus [4] Aligarh College which Sir Sayyid created became the base of operations for the first generation of Muslim activists They kept up good relations with the government Sir Sayyid had initiated and received government help in creating the All India Muslim League in 1907 and also obtained important electoral concessions in the form of separate Muslim electorates in the constitutional reforms of 1909 (Lelyveld 1978 Robinson 1993)

The new Young Party or middle class Muslim League leadership of lawyers journalists and a few full time political activists also had Lucknow as its stronghold In the years following the constitutional reforms of 1909 the League s headquarters moved from Aligarh to Lucknow and Wazir Hasan, a Lucknow lawyer and Young Party leader managed to retain tight control of the League s organization until 1919 (Robinson 1993 226–7) Further concessions to Muslim interests in the UP Municipalities Act of 1916 strengthened the hold of this leadership over the League while other political compulsions as well as their own differences with the old guard in the Muslim League made them keen to cooperate with the Indian National Congress on some issues Sayyid Nabiullah and Samiullah Beg two of the prominent Young Party leaders of the Muslim League from Lucknow participated in a Bombay meeting inaugurating the Home Rule movement in 1915 [5] Wazir Hasan, along with these two and some Congress leaders was invited to a meeting with the UP administration to try and placate leaders with advanced political ideas at the height of the Home Rule movement [6] It was this leadership of the League that forged the famous Lucknow Pact of 1916 (Owen 1975 Robinson 1993)

[4] Sajjad Hussain the proprietor and editor of the *Oudh Punch* of Lucknow never lost an opportunity to caricature Sir Sayyid, nor did Akbar Allahabadi Among Sir Sayyid s supporters in opposing the Indian National Congress in Lucknow was Newal Kishore the famous publicist

[5] UP GAD Proceedings March 1918 13 in UP GAD file 214 (UPSA)

[6] Confidential letter of H.V Lovett Commissioner Lucknow Division to Sir James Meston Lieut Governor of the United Provinces dated 28 June 1917 ibid

The Khilafat agitation and various Khilafat organizations overwhelmed the Muslim League after 1918 The Khilafat agitation was run based on an alliance between the Young Party leadership and Muslim Ulema who were coming to voice their concerns about the fate of the Turkish Caliph who was recognized as the nominal temporal head of the entire Muslim community and the fate of the Muslim sacred spaces in Arabia Here too the role of Maulana Abdul Bari based in the Firangi Mahal seminary of Lucknow was pre eminent [7]

CHANGING CONTEXTS AND HINDU NATIONALISM

Hindu nationalism of the early twentieth century built on the discursive templates created by middle class activists through the late nineteenth century publicization of religion But a Hindu nationalism defined al most exclusively by its antagonism towards Muslims was a product of very different contexts in which middle class politics operated in the early twentieth century Hali s famous nineteenth century poem Shikwa e Hind lamented the decline of Muslims in India. Yet as Ayesha Jalal points out, Hali s complaint that living in India had turned Muslims from lions into lowly beings could not in the context of that time draw protests from Hindu activists about Hali s putative lack of allegiance to India (Jalal 1997 80) Even the issue of cow protection in the 1890s did not unequivocally polarize Lucknow s public sphere along religious lines Though there was a great deal of sympathy for the cause among most Hindu publications and resentment at the attempts to restrict cow slaughter among Muslim activists most of them could soon agree that the events were unfortunate and blame the uncivilized and illiterate peas ants for the riots (Chapter Three above)

Significantly it was the Hindi–Urdu question which became one of the first issues to distinctly polarize the Lucknow middle class along commu nal lines [8] Unlike cow protection script and language were issues di rectly affecting the lives and livelihood of the middle class many of whom

[7] For Bari and the emergence of pan Islamicist ideas see GOI Home (Poll) October 1916 no 13 Deposit also Home (Poll) May 1914 A 46 and confidential letter by R. Burn Chief Secretary to the Government United Provinces to Secretary Government of India Home Department 17 September 1918 GOI Home (Poll) October 1913 (100–18) (NAI) Also Minault 1982 and Robinson 1993

[8] Hindi and Urdu are versions of the same language with an identical grammar and a shared vocabulary While Urdu is written in the Persian script Hindi is written in Devnagri, the script used for Sanskrit Attempts at classicizing both languages have led champions of Urdu to use more Persian and Arabic words while advocates of High Hindi have sought to re place foreign words with Sanskritized equivalents

were employed in or aspired to positions in government service Others had staked their position as leaders of Indian society based on their claim to represent in speech and writing the needs and wishes of Indian society to the colonial government Command over literary skills and language was the primary resource that the middle class possessed The question of which script the government was to use in its dealings with the people was therefore crucial to middle class interests in colonial Lucknow The campaign for promoting the use of Devnagri script in educational institutions and in government was more than fifty years old by the end of the nineteenth century (Dalmia 1997 King 1994 Krishna Kumar 1991) However, the Government Resolution of April 1900 allowing the use of Devnagri (often shortened to just Nagri) script in papers submitted to the government and the courts became an important source of division between Hindus and Muslims in Lucknow Allowing the use of the Devnagri script in documents submitted to the government meant that officers of the government in theory at least had to be familiar with both scripts (Robinson 1993 44 n 2) This put Muslims at a disadvantage as educated Hindus at least those with even a passing acquaintance with Sanskrit were familiar with the script while their Muslim counterparts were not. Persian and after 1837 Urdu written in the Persian script, had been the language and script of government over most of north India since the time of the Mughals Hindi in the Nagri script was looked down upon as a crude and rustic language by the Muslim elite who had hitherto seen no reason to learn the script (Robinson 1993) The Government Resolution was therefore represented by many Muslims including Hamid Ali Khan a front ranking Muslim Congress man of Lucknow as a blow directly aimed at the Mahomedan community at large and a measure which would degrade and degenerate them (H A Khan 1900 38)

But it is apparent that more than issues of bread and butter or rice and *roti* were at stake in the dispute The fact that a large number of educated Hindus of Lucknow at least till the early years of the twentieth century wrote primarily in Urdu, or in English, seems to suggest that they too shared the low opinion of Hindi as a language of civilized intercourse or were at best indifferent towards Hindi There were of course advocates of Hindi too but at least till the 1920s they were fighting an uphill battle in Lucknow In fact there was a particular crusading zeal in undertaking the propagation of Hindi in Lucknow regarded as the citadel of Urdu (*Pancham Hindi Sahitya Sammelan* 1915 4) Writing in 1949 Pandit Rupnarayan Pandey an early crusader for the propagation of Hindi and Nagri in Lucknow describes Lucknow as an Urdu stronghold in the early

years of the century Pandey remembered Shivanath Sharma s *Anand* as Lucknow s only regular Hindi paper around the turn of the century That too he says ran at a loss and was only kept up because of Sharma s devotion to the cause of the Hindi language (R Pandey n d)

Although some middle class Hindus joined the protests against the resolution in other cities the issue certainly polarized middle class activists in Lucknow around religious lines Hamid Ali Khan s pamphlet on the subject urged its readers not to take this line to recognize that Urdu was as much a Hindu as Muslim language and to urge combined opposition to the resolution In line with the sort of position which the Indian National Congress activists routinely took on matters of public interest Khan protested that the Resolution came out of private deliberations of His Honour (the Lieut Governor of the province) and was issued without public debate on the matter (H A Khan 1900 14) The Indian National Congress of which he was an active member however, ignored the issue (ibid 33) Even Urdu papers like the *Hindustani* of Hindu Congressman Ganga Prasad Varma supported the measure [9] The *Hindustani* s reasons for support of the resolution like those of many other middle class Hindus were influenced by ideological and religious considerations As early as 1896 the *Hindustani* had proposed that primary education in the province should teach students to read and write in Hindi in the Nagri script and not in the Persian character arguing that if a boy were taught only Urdu he would not be equipped to read religious books in Hindi (*SVN* 11 August 1896 424) Such were the divisions in Lucknow that a public meeting in April 1900 called to protest the Government Resolution only chose Muslims to a committee for the protection of Urdu and to prevent the introduction of Nagri in courts Among these were prominent Muslim Congressmen like Sajjad Hussain, the editor of the *Oudh Punch* and of course Hamid Ali Khan himself (H A. Khan 1900 86–91) Ultimately Hamid Ali Khan parted with the Congress on this issue and became Secretary of the newly formed Urdu Defence Association (*SVN* 10 July 1900 348) Even the Anjuman i Muhammadi a Muslim organization which had hitherto been a supporter of the Congress broke with it because of the Congress tacit approval of the Nagri resolution (*SVN* 8 May 1900 213 Hill 1991)

A second factor which contributed to the polarization of Lucknow s middle class along lines of religion was the growing importance of electoral

[9] *Hindustani* 16 March 1898 *SVN* 23 March 1898 158 It is important to note that Varma published two newspapers in Lucknow the *Hindustani* in Urdu and the *Advocate* in English but nothing in Hindi Varma s biography written in 1916 does not indicate that he ever learn Hindi or Sanskr t, and he biography itself was in Urdu (Sha an n d.)

politics Early elections to the Lucknow Municipal Board did not attract much attention or participation [10] Even the 1884 elections which promised to establish non official majorities in the municipal boards did not attract much attention in Lucknow In four out of the six wards of the municipality only a single candidate stood for the election (*SVN* 1 September 1884 615) Unfamiliarity with electoral politics and lingering belief in traditional hierarchies probably account for this initial lack of interest In 1884 the *Hindustani* believed it was simply impossible that a pleader (lawyer at lower courts) could win against candidates who were princes of the ex royal family of Oudh (*SVN* 25 August 1884 598) By the 1890s however confident middle class activists were in the thick of municipal politics particularly after the Indian Councils Act of 1892 had allowed municipal boards to recommend candidates to the Provincial Legislative Councils They were certainly troublesome enough to the official chairman of the municipal board to encourage and aid all efforts against them. In 1893 the Deputy Commissioner of Lucknow as the *ex officio* chairman of the municipal board went so far as to intervene directly in the elections to the Provincial Council to ensure the defeat of Hamid Ali Khan, then a staunch Congress supporter, against the more loyal Sri Ram [11]

Well before the issue of official scripts first polarized Lucknow s middle class along religious lines Hindu majorities in the Lucknow Municipal Board appear to have worked to enforce their own unofficial Hindu order through city politics Congress activists played a significant role in the proceedings of the board Ganga Prasad Varma who was first elected in 1887 continued to serve as the virtually unchallenged leader of the Congress group within the municipal board till his death in 1914 (Hill 1991 142) In 1891 the *Azad* complained that the Lucknow Municipal Board rejected an application to build a mosque at the same board meeting where it granted permission to build two new temples in the city (*SVN* vol I 1 October 1891 608) This charge was countered by Ganga Prasad Varma s *Hindustani* which retorted that such allegations of bias were beneath contempt and actually demanded an apology from the *Azad* The *Hindustani* presumably with first hand access to the proceedings of the board argued that the application was rejected because there were already two other mosques whose custodians objected to the proximity of the proposed mosque (ibid) Varma is rightly regarded as the maker of

[10] For the lack of interest among candidates in 1875 see GOI Home Public April 1883 A 134A–161 (NAI)

[11] GOI Home Public August 1893 A 199–204 Home Public December 1893 A 118–120 (NAI) Also Hill 1991 142–6

modern Lucknow (*DNB* vol IV 409) Once elected to the municipal board he devoted himself to efforts to improve the city and played a very active role in the way the urban structure of Lucknow was trans formed under colonial rule [12] There are reasons however to question Varma s motivations for at least a few of the improvements Varma as his biography recounts was a staunch Hindu and one who was influ enced by Hindu revivalism (*DNB* vol IV 409–10) In 1898 his paper the *Hindustani* argued for greater restrictions on the sale of meat in the city (*SVN* 26 October 1898 563)

After the script controversy however the differences between Hindu and Muslim groups in local politics appear in sharper relief In 1910 when Varma was vice chairman of the Lucknow Municipal Board (a civil ser vice officer had to be the chairman) the board proposed a by law which sought to regulate and license all shops selling meat *kababs* in the city Kababs were mostly sold by Muslims and the law proposed that no li cence be granted for a shop which was next to or opposite a house or shop occupied by a Hindu [13] In 1912, Muslims of a locality petitioned the Lieutenant Governor against the exercise of arbitrary and partisan au thority by Ganga Prasad Varma claiming that Varma was misusing his power to forcibly acquire ostensibly on the grounds of sanitation and civic improvement valuable properties belonging to Muslims while leav ing even filthy and congested Hindu localities well alone [14]

After the script controversy of 1900 it was the government s decision to introduce special representation for Muslims in Legislative Councils in 1909 and weighted reservation of seats in the municipalities in 1916 which worked to polarize Hindu and Muslim public sphere activists most clearly in colonial Lucknow By the end of the first decade of the twenti eth century municipal and provincial politics had become an important source of prestige patronage and power for the Lucknow middle class as for their counterparts elsewhere in India Any measure which threatened this important source of power was bound to be resented (Robinson 1993 54–8) In response to the decision to implement reservations for Mus lims Ganga Prasad Varma s *Advocate* suggested the need for an explicitly Hindu organization to counteract the growing power of the Muslim League (*SVN* 23 December 1910 1071) Bishan Narain Dar in his Presidential address to the 1911 session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta

[12] Veena Talwar Oldenburg s excellent study of Lucknow only focuses on activities of colonial officials till 1877 (Oldenburg 1989) Had her study included the later period the role of native improvers like Ganga Prasad Varma could not have gone unnoticed

[13] GOI Home Poll October 1915 A 100–18 (NAI) The rule had to be modified UP Municipal Department file 709D (UPSA)

also fumed against the unfairness of separate representation for Muslims and ratified the idea of Hindu Sabhas (associations) (Dar 1921 325) Even before Dar s speech Ganga Prasad Varma had presided over the founding meeting of the Provincial Hindu Association in Allahabad on 25 February 1911 [15]

The 1916 Municipalities Act provided weighted reservation of seats for Muslims in municipal bodies in the United Provinces As a mark of protest Hindu members resigned their seats from the board and decided not to contest the 1916 municipal elections in Lucknow [16] The Act was of course celebrated by Muslim representatives who held public meetings in Lucknow to praise its provisions just as the Hindu Sabha criticized the Act in its meetings [17] Hindu protests also drew criticism from a variety of Muslim opinion. A Muslim Home Ruler warned that Hindu agitation against the Bill supported by a section of the Congress would completely destroy the nascent amity and friendliness of feeling between the two communities and restore the silly sectarian antagonism bickerings and hostilities which were rampant many years ago [18]

The participation of Lucknow s Hindu middle class in organizations created explicitly to forward Hindu political interests certainly dates from the period of challenges to their electoral aspirations Ganga Prasad Varma presided over the Provincial Hindu Association shortly after the Indian Councils Act of 1909 In December 1916 the All India Hindu Sabha held its annual meeting in Lucknow and protested against the Municipalities Act and of the Congress sell out to Muslim interests in its attempts to negotiate a pact with the Muslim League (Owen 1975 579) Electoral politics clearly sharpened the intensity with which middle class Hindus of Lucknow engaged in politics on behalf of a Hindu community in opposition to a similarly defined political community of Muslims In the context of the cow protection movement Bishan Narain Dar had felt that Hindu (or Muslim) organizations in the long run did more harm than good (see Chapter Three above) By 1911 he had changed his mind enough to advocate the forming of Hindu Sabhas

[15] GOI Home Poll June 1911 B 1–3 Weekly Report dated 11 April 1911 (NAI)

[16] UP Proceedings of the Municipal Department (henceforth Municipal) file RB 81 Block (UPSA)

[17] UP Municipal, file 230E (UPSA) Resolutions passed at a Muslim meeting at Lucknow 11 October 1916 Telegram from Raja Tassaduq Rasul Khan to Private Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor United Provinces 13 October 1916 Also see Hindu Conference at Benaras 20 August 1916 ibid

[18] Letter of a Muslim Home Ruler in *Indian Daily Telegraph* GOI Home Poll October 19 6 B 406–8 (NAI)

By 1917 there were a varıety of Hındu organızatıons ın Lucknow In addıtıon to membershıp ın Provıncıal or All Indıa Hındu Sabhas promı nent mıddle class Hındus of Lucknow ıncludıng some of the new Con gress leaders of the cıty were ınvolved ın organızatıons lıke the UP *Dharma Rakshana Samıtı* (Commıttee for the Protectıon of Hındu Relıgıon) (*Ad vocate* 15 May 1917) Moreover, organızatıons whıch were a part of the Natıonal Congress were gettıng overtly Hındu ızed The *Sewa Samıtıs* (Servıce Leagues) were Congress sponsored organızatıons The Oudh Sewa Samıtı was formed ın 1915 though ıt became actıve only after ıts reorganızatıon ın 1917 [19] Naraın Swamı Swamı Rama Tırtha s dıscıple played an ımportant part ın ıts reorganızatıon and was one of ıts Com manders (Sharga 1968 405–6) At a Sewa Samıtı meetıng on 7 May 1917 Naraın Swamı exhorted people to raıse the Hındu natıon to the posıtıon whıch ıt occupıed ın ancıent tımes (*Advocate* 10 May 1917) Promınent Congress leaders of Lucknow lıke Gokaran Nath Mısra and A P Sen actıvely partıcıpated not only ın the Sewa Samıtı, but also the Dharma Rakshana Samıtı and the Hındu Unıon Club (*Advocate* 5 May and 15 May 1917)

Most of the Hındu polıtıcal assocıatıons dıd come about ın the context of electoral polıtıcs A closer look at the some of theır agenda and actıv ıty however reveals that these organızatıons also shared a great deal wıth the earlıer Hındu natıonalıst agenda of strengthenıng of a 'Hındu com munıty through ımprovements rather than antagonısm towards a Mus lım Other Of the Hındu organızatıons noted above the Hındu Sabha was the one most evıdently connected wıth promotıng a Hındu agenda ın opposıtıon to Muslıms For ınstance ıt was the Hındu Sabha whıch protested most vocıferously agaınst the Congress sell out ın negotıatıng a pact wıth the Muslım League ın 1916 Yet even the Hındu Sabha s agenda at ıts annual meetıng ın December 1916 was dırected at ıssues lıke the preservatıon of temples ımprovıng sadhus etc even though the tımıng ensured that protests agaınst the Munıcıpalıty Act also fıgured Yet the agenda suggests that even the All Indıa Hındu Conference was equally concerned about dıscussıng ways of encouragıng greater homoge neıty among Hındus through the ıntroductıon of congregatıonal worshıp joınt celebratıon of Hındu natıonal festıvals use of the Nagrı character and of course the formatıon of more Hındu Sabhas (*Indıan Socıal Re former* 21 December 1916) Partıcıpatıon ın organızatıons lıke the Hındu Sabha was however a departure from the sort of Hındu natıonalıst sen tıments expressed by someone lıke Swamı Rama Tırtha or even Bıshan

UP GAD File 604 1920 (UPSA)

Narain Dar before his 1911 speech Though the nineteenth century discourse of Hindu nationalism as well as these twentieth century organizations wanted to strengthen an imagined Hindu community in the rapidly changing contexts of twentieth century Lucknow there was coming to be a very fine line between Hindu self strengthening efforts and a Hindu nationalism with an explicitly anti Muslim agenda

It is a third important moment in Hindu–Muslim relations the riot of September 1924 that reveals the extent to which political realities and middle class rhetoric had changed in the 1920s The rhetoric and politics surrounding the Hindu–Muslim riot in Lucknow in 1924 demonstrates the extent to which both continuities as well as changed contexts shaped the nature of Hindu nationalism in the 1920s The major cause of the dispute was the overlap in times of the Hindu *aarti* (prayers which can involve ringing temple bells and conch shells) and Muslim prayers (*namaaz*) held in a park adjoining the temple [20] This park was created in the Aminabad area of Lucknow in 1908 as part of the improving endeavours of the Lucknow Municipal Board with the active involvement of Ganga Prasad Varma [21] The Hindu temple existed at the spot before the park was created and in 1908 found itself right on the boundary of the park though technically outside its limits [22] Over time Muslim shopkeepers in the Aminabad area began holding their evening prayers in the park In 1924 however Muslim leaders argued that Hindu aarti was deliberately being held at such a time and in such a manner so as to disrupt the Muslim prayers Initial attempts by the Deputy Commissioner to arbitrate in the dispute did not resolve the problem This dispute was at the root of the 1924 riot which kept the commercial area of the city closed for more than three days and tension in the city high for over a month

One reason for the dispute in Aminabad park was the active involvement of a confident and assertive Lucknow Hindu Sabha in the dispute Hindus praying at the temple in Aminabad apparently began ringing bells at just the time of Muslim evening prayers Under the leadership of the Hindu Sabha in particular Narain Swami Hindu activists had success

[20] UP GAD file 479 of 1924 (UPSA)

[21] UP Municipal file 452 Block In a demi official letter Harcourt Butler praised Babu Ganga Prasad Varma as the originator and most active supporter of the scheme D O letter 28 2 1907 ibid (UPSA)

[22] UP Municipal file 452 Block See map attached as enclosure to Butler s demi official letter of 28 2 1907 There is however an inexplicable reduction in the proposed size of the park, which allowed the temple to remain outside the then proposed park Compare the note of Saunders (Commissioner Lucknow Division) to Gillian Chief Secretary Government of United Provinces 8 May 1908 with the map of the park ibid (UPSA)

fully recovered two hitherto abandoned temples in the Alambagh area of the city which the British controlled railway authorities were going to knock down in January of 1924 [23] Early in September 1924 Narain Swami had also led a protest against government restrictions on a Hindu procession [24] Lucknow s administrators thought that the activities of Na ain Swami and the Hindu Sabhas of Lucknow had created the mood which resulted in the riot of 1924 [25] This mood was best represented by Raja Rampal Singh a Taluqdar and President of the Awadh Hindu Sabha on a visit to the Deputy Commissioner in 1924 Singh explained the Hindu intransigence on the temple issue by claiming that Hindus had submitted long enough to the domination of the Muslims and were [now] out to assert themselves [26] At one level this closely resembles the assertions of someone like Dar or Rama Tirtha which too aimed at strengthening the Hindu community However though both displayed a concern with erasing Hindu weakness the crucial difference in the 1920s was that such empowering efforts were often directed against Muslims

Congress politics of the 1920s also contributed to its own set of social and political divisions A rump of older moderates and liberals continued to have reservations about the style of politics initiated with the Non Cooperation and Khilafat movements (Kaif 1986 32–3) Others even while participating in the movement did not always subscribe to all the tenets of Gandhian nationalism Mohanlal Saxena an important Congress leader of Lucknow apparently asked Congress volunteers to demonstrate a Gandhian spirit of sacrifice and commitment to a new egalitarian order by cleaning out drains in the city Most volunteers presumably upper caste refused to have any further dealing with Saxena and he was forced to apologize to the volunteers [27] Moreover while the Congress had hardly been a monolith in earlier times the end of the Non Cooperation movement and the decision to enter the Provincial Councils brought to the surface many of the factional divisions such as those between the Swarajist Motilal Nehru and Madan Mohan Malaviya (Pandey 1978)

In Lucknow intrigues and factional battles of the Congress played an important role in the mobilization of Hindu opinion and contributed to the Hindu–Muslim riot of 1924 To embarrass the Swarajist controlled municipal board of Lucknow the Congress faction opposed to them

[23] UP GAD file 510 of 1924 (UPSA)

[24] *Indian Daily Telegraph* 6 September 1924 and 9 September 1924 UP GAD file 479 of 1924 (UPSA)

[25] Ibid Cassels to Lambert demi official letter 18 September 1924

Ibid

[27] PAI 1 July 1922 1060 (CRR)

supported the Hindu Sabhas and encouraged Hindu militancy on the question of temple prayers[28] Swarajist leaders made all efforts to resolve the issue amicably Maulana Abdul Bari who was important in Khilafat affairs agreed to advise Muslims in Lucknow not to hold prayers in the park after Gandhi s appeal for Hindu–Muslim unity[29] Madan Mohan Malaviya however addressed a Hindu Sabha meeting in November 1925 and urged his audience to keep the issue alive for the forthcoming mu nicipal elections[30] By the end of the year, the question was still a central issue in municipal election campaigns with all candidates mentioning the park dispute[31] As a consequence of Hindu opinion mobilized at the time of the riots predominantly Hindu Sabha ite rather than Swarajist Hindu members were elected to Lucknow s Municipal Board in the elec tions of December 1925[32] In April 1927 this board passed a resolution (with the casting vote of the Hindu chairman deciding the issue) which prohibited any religious or semi religious ceremony or gathering inside the Aminabad Park The temple on account of being technically out side the park was exempt from this ruling Later that year the municipal board acting on its earlier resolution refused permission to hold a *Milad* (celebrations in honour of the Prophet s birthday) in Aminabad Park This resulted in mass resignations of the Muslim members from the board[33] As a retaliatory measure a meeting of angry Muslim leaders in Lucknow proposed that money reserved for the Milad celebrations be used to buy twenty five cows for slaughtering with the meat to be distributed among the Muslim poor[34]

With the Gandhian non cooperation movement called off there was certainly a distinct lull in mass political activity Whether it was factional politics related to Council or municipal elections or as is suggested a more general frustration and discontent born out of the sudden petering out of the [non cooperation] movement (B Chandra 1979) the period following the withdrawal of non cooperation in 1922 witnessed a great increase in the number and intensity of Hindu–Muslim disputes across

[28] UP GAD 479 of 1924 Gwynne Deputy Commissioner Lucknow to Cassels Commis sioner Lucknow Division 13 November 1924 (UPSA)

[29] PAI 11 October 1924 334 For other efforts of the Swarajists to resolve the issue amicably PAI 22 November 1924 389 (CRR)

[30] PAI 28 November 1925 (CRR)

[31] PAI 12 December 1925 533 (CRR)

[32] GOI Home Poll file 112(I) 1925 December 1925 FR UP 1st half of December 1925 (NAI)

[33] UP GAD file 503 of 1927 (UPSA)

[34] PAI 24 September 1927 369 There was even talk of starting a civil disobedience cam paign on this issue Ibid 378

north India (Freitag 1989a Thursby 1975) These conflicts too came to figure prominently in Hindu public sphere rhetoric about the weakness of Hindus and the need for a stronger more assertive Hindu self Neither nationalist politics alone nor purely local concerns can alone explain the transformation of Hindu politics and rhetoric in colonial Lucknow Rather than any one a combination of factors created an environment where middle class activists constructed an assertive and belligerent idea of Hindu community A close reading of some of the articulations of this reconstituted Hindu community in Lucknow s journals allows us to better understand the texts as well as the contexts of Hindu nationalism in Lucknow in the 1920s

Newspapers and journals in Lucknow even literary magazines which claimed to be above political loyalties like *Madhuri* came to espouse explicit support for those endeavours which championed the just causes of the Hindu race [*jati*] and Hindu religion [dharma] Dismissing the notion that *Madhuri* was either opposed to or soft on the question of defence of Hindu rights [*Hindu hit raksha*] the editors claimed that their journal would put its full support behind the defence of such rights (*Madhuri* August 1927) *Madhuri* and later *Sudha* another literary journal founded in 1927 by former editors of *Madhuri* lived up to their claim Almost each month these journals carried reports of communal riots of the abduction and molestation of Hindu women and strictures on the cowardice of the Hindu male Repeatedly editorials as well as correspondents writing in *Madhuri* and *Sudha* called for greater Hindu unity and empowerment echoing the calls for Hindu *Sangathan* being made by revivalist leaders in the United Provinces and Punjab [35] The blame for riots was equally put on the aggressive and violent proclivities of Muslims and the lassitude of the Hindu public which had allowed the Hindu race to degenerate to the extent that Hindu religion and Hindu women were considered easy game by Muslims

A close examination of the texts of these journals provides a clearer insight into the extent to which this discourse of Hindu nationalism both built upon yet was distinct from the nineteenth century Hindu nationalism of men like Rama Tirtha A masculinist nationalism was the characteristic of both kinds of discourse (Rosselli 1980 Sinha 1995) Even Ratan Nath Sarshar the nineteenth century writer and journalist who was never involved in any sort of advocacy of Hindu causes had deplored the

[35] The *Sangathan* movement was an aggressive programme of Hindu unity closely allied to the purificatory *Shuddhi* programme seeking reconversion of Hindus whose ancestors it was claim d had been fo cibly converted to Islam. See Jones 1989 Thursby 1975

unmanly physique of Lucknow s effete aesthetes comparing them with the vigorous Europeans (Premchand 1987 53) Rama Tirtha s writing also shows the concern with overcoming weakness and Dar was pleased that the Azamgarh peasants had demonstrated that the Hindus were not an unmanly race (Chapter Three above) The nationalism of journals like *Madhuri* in the 1920s too remained within the parameters of this masculinist discourse The difference however was that in the latter pe riod Hindu masculinity was called upon to do battle against the Mus lims *Madhuri* was concerned enough with this issue to actually draw upon evidence from statistics of an insurance company which showed the rela tive height and weight of Hindus and Muslims of different provinces Citing these figures *Madhuri* argued that in physique Hindus are second to none the physique of Hindus from the Punjab even matches those of Europeans All that was needed was for Hindus to develop their un doubted physical potential so as to protect their temples and their women from the insults they are subject to every day (*Madhuri* November 1926 579) An article titled The Punishment for Being Weak (*Nirbaltaa ka Dand*) in *Sudha* began with the words *kamzor ki joru sabki salhaj* which translates as A weak man s wife becomes every man s partner Hindus *Sudha* argued gave in too easily which was why officials rowdies or just about anyone could oppress the Hindus (*Sudha* October 1927) *Madhuri* was much more singular in defining the anyone The only way that *Muslims* would learn to stop terrorizing the Hindus the editors argued was if they knew that Hindus too know how to die for their religion (*Madhuri* June 1923 579)

The discourse of Hindu nationalism in the 1920s was different not simply in terms of antagonism to Muslims but in the perception of the Hindu community itself Probably because of the growth of electoral poli tics an extremely enumerated conception of the Hindu community to gether with a greater concern for expanding its boundaries was apparent in the politics and rhetoric of Hindu publicists in Lucknow in the 1920s In the general narrative of Hindu decline in the 1920s numbers particu larly from the census began to play an extremely important role [36] Al though this decline was usually attributed to the machinations of other religious communities to lure Hindus away from the fold there was also some recognition that Hindu practices needed to be changed to prevent straying of the flock Presenting the statistics of decline in Hindu num

[36] See, *Madhuri*, editorial April 1923 469–70 and a contributed article April 1924 349 For a nuanced understanding of how the trope of the dying Hindu was deployed in changing —— see Datta 1993

bers *Madhuri* said in 1923 that the decline was a result of carelessness of the Hindu jati and its abhorrence of the lower castes (*Madhuri* April 1923 469)

Like Dar or Swami Rama Tirtha the editors and contributors of *Madhuri* and *Sudha* too deprecated the way that divisions and differences between Hindus vitiated the essential unity of the Hindu community Lucknow s journals did express regret at the insufficient feeling of a common Hinduness on account of caste (*Madhuri* April 1924 348–51) The focus in the 1920s however was on the incorporation of the Untouchables into the Hindu fold Yet this issue too often came up in the context of declining numbers of Hindus and the implications of this loss to the Hindu community if they converted to Islam or Christianity Unlike earlier efforts at forging a sense of Hindu community however, there was no at systematically attacking caste practices or even at denying their legitimacy On the contrary there is evidence of a conservative backlash on this issue Whereas earlier caste restrictions were seen as the source of divisions in the Hindu community confronting caste practices came to be deemed socially divisive in the 1920s

The discourse of Hindu assertiveness in colonial Lucknow demonstrated a move towards increasing reification of the category of Hindu Activities of men like Bishan Narain Dar or Rama Tirtha had already abstracted Hindu religiosity from devotional or cultural practices to relate it solely to the notion of a Hindu community Hindu nationalism in the 1920s demonstrates the extent to which notions of even the Hindu community became simply numerical and political abstractions It was the idea of an enumerated Hindu community which drove the support for shuddhi (reconversion literally purification) It was shuddhi rather than caste reform, which *Madhuri* advocated as the means of stemming the decline of Hindus [*Hinduon ka Hraas*] (*Madhuri* April 1923) It was a concern with numbers and that too represented as a programme of recovering stolen goods which inspired this support for shuddhi Shuddhi the editors argued was not aimed at absorbing members of other religious communities Rather, it was a way of recovering to the fold those Hindus who had been lured away through duplicity and force If our religious opponents feel so strongly about returning other peoples belongings *Madhuri* contended then how can one who has lost all his possessions be expected to sit by silently watching such robbery (ibid) The reification of the Hindu in middle class public discourse had now reached the point where he or she was perceived as little more than a commodity to be possessed stolen and recovered The modern Hindu community which had always been a construct of middle class politics in the first place had

now become a possession the patrimony of the middle class who could add to it lose parts of it or indeed have parts of it stolen from them (see Ramaswamy 1997 11 244)

Only the reified notions of religious communities of the 1920s could in fact produce a completely a historical a contextual Muslim other The tropes of Hindu weakness and Hindu decline allowed for a correspond ing generalized discourse of Muslim fanaticism violence and of their in herent enmity towards Hindus Within such a narrative framework any specific act carried out by a Muslim could be represented as demonstrat ing the inherent intolerance or the natural proclivities of Muslims Loca tion in time the specificity of a situation or the actual happening was almost irrelevant to such narratives In November 1924 *Madhuri* took the Swarajist leaders in Lucknow to task for not protecting Hindu rights over the issue of prayers in the Aminabad Park While Hindu prayers have been stopped [37] *Madhuri* fumed Muslims continue to pray in the park Will the suppression of the rights of one group alone stop the en mity the editors enquired? It was hardly fair they claimed that Muslims should keep committing atrocities despite having no [legal] rights should continue to hold prayers in the park *continue to destroy temples and idols* keep indulging in violence and Hindus should quietly bear all the losses and insults is this the way to stop the enmity? (*Madhuri* November 1924 430 Emphasis added)

Muslim prayers in Aminabad Park were of course a very real source of conflict in 1924 Despite extensive accounts of the issue in a variety of sources there is absolutely no evidence of any destruction of temples or idols in Lucknow In the charged atmosphere of the time it is unlikely that journals like *Madhuri* and *Sudha* or indeed the daily reports of the Deputy Commissioner of Lucknow would not have taken note of such an incident [38] It is reasonable to conclude therefore that nothing of the sort actually occurred The events in Lucknow right outside the *Madhuri* offices in fact [39] simply became a part of a more generalized construction of typical Muslim anti Hindu activity an example of their inherent ten dencies Much like Gyanendra Pandey s colonial construction of com munalism —where communalism is defined as a form of colonial knowledge a way of erasing specificity through incorporation in master

[37] Hindu leaders had stopped holding prayers as a protest against attempts by the administra tion to regulate Hindu prayer timings

[38] The file on Lucknow Riots contains daily reports of the Deputy Commissioner on the developing Hindu–Muslim tension in Lucknow UP GAD file 479 of 1924 (UPSA)

[39] In a report on the riot in September 1924 *Madhuri* s editors described the Aminabad Park temple as opposite the *Madhuri* offices *Madhuri* September 1924 284

narratives of native fanaticism—these Lucknow journals were engaged in their own nat ve construction of communalism (Pandey 1990)

The uncompromising hostility of the Hindu nationalists was predicated on a great deal of confidence on the part of the Hindu middle class activists Representing a reified numerical majority Hindu community evidently provided a great deal of confidence to the supporters of the Hindu cause in colonial Lucknow They were able to take a hard line against all those who they saw as opposing Hindu interests This of course meant Muslims but in certain contexts could also refer to other political opponents such as Swarajist Congressmen who in the name of nationalism put unity with Muslims above Hindu interests With the mobilization of Hindu opinion at its peak over the Aminabad Park affair, *Madhuri* warned the Swarajists that they would find it impossible to be elected the next time if they continued to trample upon the rights of Hindus (*Madhuri* November 1924 431)

Madhuri was willing to concede that Hindu–Muslim unity was absolutely necessary and regretted the poisonous enmity which pervades the hearts of the two main communities at this time Such enmity the editors argued would not only have horrifying consequences for the communities but also impede national progress Hindus and Muslims cannot hope to progress or prosper by fighting in this manner in the name of religion they contended Until the two communities can cooperate together, and put their heart and soul into the task of improving the nation s condition, they will have to rely on others to protect their rights Hindus Muslims Christians Parsis etc all Indians are brothers the editors asserted and that all sensible men amongst them knew that they could maintain their rights freedom and distinct cultures even while cooperating with each other (ibid 566) It was unfortunate the article suggested that given the possibilities of cooperation some fanatic *maulvis* are trying to revive a caprice from the days of Muslim rule to eliminate all *kufra* (heresy) from the land In this editorial titled It is Folly to Oppose Hindu Sangathan the editors then went on to describe the widespread support that the idea of Muslim supremacism received from a variety of Muslim leaders Given such unreasonable behaviour on the part of Muslim leaders *Madhuri* lamented that even sensible educated Muslims who favoured Hindu–Muslim unity had begun to oppose Hindu *sangathan* and along with them a few Hindu leaders and intellectuals as well (ibid)

However reasonably the arguments were presented the rhetoric of journals like *Madhuri* and *Sudha* could not conceal an agenda which ultimately aimed at Hind empowerment The only way to have true unity

between Hindus and Muslims the article in *Madhuri* continued was to first have a strong and united Hindu community for which sangathan was essential If the braids of a rope are weak then the rope itself will weaken argued *Madhuri* and if even the smallest community in the nation were weak or disunited it would hamper the task of nation building

> there can be no true union between Hindus and Muslims as long as Hindus are weak when the Hindu community has demonstrated through its sangathan strength that it is not easy game for attack or oppression other communities will of their own accord *respectfully* offer them true friendship and cooperation (ibid 567–8 emphasis added)

With the confidence which political activity of the 1920s had imbued in them with the confidence which came with being the representatives of a numerical majority what middle class Hindus demanded from their opponents was respectful cooperation At the same time these men were increasingly coming to demonstrate their own intolerance and disincli nation towards any sort of compromise While unity with Muslims was acceptable this was increasingly coming to mean unity on Hindu terms *Madhuri* in fact warned Muslims that if they were truly desirous of unity they should not try to put forward demands in the manner of the terms of a *nikaah* (the Islamic marriage contract) (*Madhuri* January 1924 817) If Muslims were not prepared for such unity the editors warned they too will have to taste the bitter fruit of disunity Hinting at the power of the Hindu majority the article warned Muslims of the political losses they were bound to suffer once swaraj and democratic rule were established (ibid)

While notions of respectful cooperation and majoritarian authoritari anism intimated aspirations towards a Hindu hegemony the strength ened and disciplined male Hindu body was also to be made ready for dominance through more coercive and less democratic means Antici pating the ideals embodied in Keshavrao Hedgewar s Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) by almost exactly a year, *Madhuri* outlined its conception of the ideal form of the sangathan organizations among youth Young men in towns were urged to meet regularly in some public place and, following a lecture on religious or moral themes were advised to start physical exercises including training in wrestling and stick fighting (*Madhuri* September 1924 Anderson and Damle 1987)

By constructing a homogeneous Hindu community free from divi sions of caste class or gender nineteenth century middle class Hindu were able to put forward an agenda which reflected parochial concerns while claiming to defend the rights of the putative Hindu commun ty

This empty Hindu religiosity was then deployed in a variety of public sphere projects especially at times when the growing middle class power and authority in the public sphere were challenged by other competing visions of the nation in the form of Muslim nationalism Building on the discursive templates of an earlier Hindu nationalism the contexts of the 1920s produced a much more aggressive anti Muslim variety of Hindu nationalism Like the earlier vision however even this reconstituted and belligerent variety of Hindu nationalism was ultimately aimed at the as sertion of middle class power in the colonial sphere as was demonstrated by the activities of Hindu activists of the 1920s in Lucknow at various times By this time much more clearly than in the times of early Hindu public sphere activists like Dar or Varma Muslim politics was perceived as the major impediment to the realization of Hindu empowerment *Madhuri* lauded the hard line taken by Hindu activists in the Aminabad Park dispute This dispute had culminated in the most serious communal riots in Lucknow s history *Madhuri* s editors however, celebrated the es calation of tension because it created a greater awareness of their rights among the city s Hindus Now the editorial said it seems that Hindus do live in this city and not just Muslims (*Madhuri* January 1925 848–9)

It is tempting on the basis of the above analysis to trace an exclusive history of Hindu nationalism and track its development from nineteenth century self strengthening endeavours of middle class activists to the hegemonic aspirations of the Hindu middle class of the 1920s and per haps even of the middle class of the 1990s Such a linear history would however have to ignore the complex braiding and intertwining of many histories which made middle class Hindu nationalism both possible yet also impossible in colonial Lucknow Tracing an exclusive history of the Hindu right means overlooking contradictions and cohesions which gave Lucknow s middle class Hindu nationalism its specific characteristics yet rendered it comparable to middle class projects the world over Looking at how a Hindu political and cultural identity evolved in colonial Lucknow necessarily involves paying close attention to other kinds of political ac tivities other rhetoric which the same men institutions organizations and journals advocated at the same time as they were espousing the cause of the putative Hindu community even if that rhetoric or those activities appear to have been at odds with the Hindu nationalist project

ALTERNATIVE LOYALTIES

If the history of political relations between Hindu and Muslim middle class activists between c 1900 and 1930 allow us to trace an incremental

level of hostility and separation examining this history in detail equally suggests that there was at least as much cooperation between Hindu and Muslim leaders in Lucknow as there was conflict and discord A tight geographic focus precludes the tracing of any sort of a simple developmentalist narrative of incremental Hindu nationalism Despite the polarizations around cow protection or the emerging Hindi–Urdu issue 50 per cent of the delegates to the Indian National Congress session in Lucknow in 1899 were Muslims (Hill 1991) The resignations of Hindu members from the Lucknow Municipal Board protesting excessive Muslim representation in 1916 did not last long By 1917 letters from Hindu readers of the *Advocate* were already suggesting that in view of Muslim participation in the Home Rule movement Hindus should return to the board (*Advocate* 5 July 1917) A prominent Congressman of Lucknow argued that the conflict over the Municipalities Act was between the Hindus and the government and not between Hindus and Muslims Singling out the Raja of Mahmudabad a prominent Muslim landlord for praise Mukut Behari Lal Bhargava wrote Mahmudabad is as much a Home Ruler as Malaviya and as much a Congressi as Jagat Narain There have been no differences between Hindus and Muslims over resolutions in the Municipal Board They should unite [40] By 1920 not only were Hindus back in the board but Hindu and Muslim leaders from Lucknow were cooperating closely during the Khilafat and non cooperation agitation In September 1919 Abdul Bari who had reportedly declared a *jihad* (holy war) against Hindus in 1917 over cow protection riots in Bihar,[41] telegraphed Gandhi to say that to remove all causes of friction between the two communities there would be no cow sacrifice at Firangi Mahal [42] Bari was also involved in trying to work out a compromise on the Aminabad park dispute Nor were the Muslim resignations from the municipal board in 1927 over religious celebrations in Aminabad Park any more permanent than those of their Hindu counterparts In 1929 the Lucknow Municipal Board under the chairmanship of a Muslim Chaudhri Khaliquzzaman also refused permission to hold a Milad in Aminabad Park and there were no protests from Muslims in Lucknow (Ganju 1980)

[40] Letter to the editor *Advocate* 19 July 1917 In the dispute over temple prayers in 1924 however Bhargava was taking the position of a Hindu extremist UP GAD file 479 of 1924

[41] GOI Home Poll January 1918 no 1 Deposit FR for the first half of November 1917 The declaration was made at a public meeting in Lucknow on hearing a report about Muslim victims of the cow protection riots in Bihar

[42] GOI Home Poll September 1919 B 454–7 (NAI) Weekly report of the Director of Criminal Intelligence 29 September 1919

If political alliances between prominent Hindus and Muslims shifted constantly the lack of a singular Hindu nationalist agenda is even more evident when we consider the positions taken by individuals *Lakshman* a journal edited by an important Congressman of Lucknow had insisted that Hindus would not give up shuddhi as it would be considered a sign of Hindu weakness by Muslims (*SVN* 8 September 1923 2–3 *Madhuri* January 1923) Yet the same man also requested Khaliquzzaman to convene a meeting of Hindu and Muslim leaders to amicably settle their differences after the riot in Lucknow in September 1924 (Khaliquzzaman 1961 71) Similarly Harish Chandra Bajpai who brought out a paper *Aarti* specifically to promote the Hindu cause over the *aarti–namaaz* dispute in Aminabad Park in 1924 was active in the Congress as well In fact Harish Chandra Bajpai was one of the Congressmen accused of injuring policemen during the anti–Simon Commission demonstration in Lucknow in 1928 during which he cooperated closely with Muslim leaders like Khaliquzzaman [43]

C S Ranga Iyer was another figure who moved between Swarajist Congressism and Hindu militancy This former editor of the *Advocate* was also elected to the UP Legislative Assembly in 1923 as a Swarajist candidate An official report described him as an unbalanced extremist' who detests European civilization but who did not support Gandhi s non violence creed The report however, described him as a staunch supporter of Hindu–Muslim unity [44] Yet in 1924 Ranga Iyer was present at meetings in Lucknow taking an aggressively pro Hindu position even more extreme than that of Narain Swami At a Hindu Sabha meeting Iyer is reported to have claimed that he owed his swarajism to Hinduism and stirred the crowd with his demands for action rather than simply speeches [45] Narain Swami himself moved between militant advocacy of Hindu cause as an extremist leader of the Hindu Sabha a moderating voice against calls for direct action by Hindus over the Aminabad Park affair and at the same time as a proponent of Hindu–Muslim unity in Lucknow Apart from his role in the Aminabad affair, Narain Swami spoke out against the pro Muslim bias of the government in 1925 [46] yet in 1926 he presided over meetings to promote Hindu–Muslim amity and cautioned

[43] For Bajpai s involvement with *Aarti* see *SNP* 1925 10–11 For his arrest in the anti–Simon Commission demonstration see UP GAD file 566 of 1928 (UPSA)

[44] GOI Home Poll 1924 no 66+WW (NAI)

[45] Report of a public meeting in Hussainganj Lucknow on the proposal to start a satyagraha over the aarti–namaaz issue *Indian Daily Telegraph* 2 December 1924 in UP GAD file 479 of 1924 (UPSA)

[46] PAI 14 Novembe 1925 471 (CRR)

his audience that quarrels between the two communities only strengthened the government [47]

What explains the dualism of the Hindu middle class activists? How was it that middle class activists could and did move between agenda which sought to assert Hindu rights and simultaneously also advocate Hindu–Muslim unity? The simplest explanation and one which was favoured by the old Cambridge School scholars was to point to the Machiavellian politics of the Indian elite The reason that there were shifting political alliances the only explanation for the contrary positions held by the middle class activists was that they were out there for what they could get Ideology it was suggested played little or no part in their politics so they made the alliances and articulated the rhetoric that were necessary for them to maximize their gains in any given situation However, when the authors of such explanations are themselves coming to recognize the importance of ideology in motivating political behaviour this is not an explanation that need detain us for long.[48] Another possible explanation offered by Ayesha Jalal among others is that secular nationalism, or the advocacy of Hindu–Muslim unity was only a liberal façade that covered an essentially Hindu nationalist agenda (Jalal 1997) But why would a real Hindu nationalism need this façade? Why could not the Congress explicitly represent Hindu interests? In the absence of any clear explanation one can only presume that the answer lies more in the realms of realpolitik than ideology Thus we are back to explanations that emphasize the Machiavellian nature of middle class politics rather than trying to place their world view contradictions and all in the context of their time

To some extent the events of the time can explain the changes and shifts in positions taken by the Hindu middle class Many historians have pointed out that communal politics in north India ebbed at the times when the nationalist' Congress led anti colonial movement peaked and vice versa (B Chandra 1984) The most virulently anti Muslim form of Hindu nationalism emerged in colonial Lucknow soon after Gandhi unilaterally called off the non cooperation movement in 1922 which together with the Khilafat movement had effectively forged close political unity between the Congress and groups representing Muslims in north

[47] PAI 25 September and 20 November 1926 516 597 (CRR)

[48] Francis Robinson, one of the most articulate exponents of the Cambridge approach now admits that it was a mistake to harbour the deep scepticism regarding human motivation and not recognize how it was possible to be gripped by an idea to be motivated and to strive to transform reality in the light of that idea (Robinson 1993 xvi)

India In his autobiography Chaudhry Khaliquzzaman traces fissiparous tendencies between Hindus and Muslims to the calling off of the non cooperation movement (Khaliquzzaman 1961 63–4) A concern with the nation however remained central to the discourse even of those espousing Hindu militancy in Lucknow *Swaraj* (self rule) therefore was very much a part of the agenda of Hindu publicists There was for instance some nostalgia for the true unity between Hindus and Muslims in the days of the Khilafat and non cooperation movements But the end of the political alliance forged with the Khilafatists in the early 1920s meant that Hindu activists now began representing Muslim support for the Turkish Khilafat of other involvement in pan Islamic movements as evidence of their anti national proclivities because despite being born in India they maintained greater loyalties to institutions outside India (*Madhuri* August 1926 100) Now journals like *Madhuri* argued that alliances with or concessions to Indian Muslims demeaned the self respect of Hindus At times they went far enough to say that even political independence if it came at the expense of Hindu self respect was unacceptable to them (*Madhuri* August 1923 257)

Changes in local politics may also be partly responsible for the about face which the same Hindu activists apparently made in the late 1920s A disenchantment caused by the lack of success in mobilizing a Hindu political community and the ineffectiveness of Hindu Sabha politics may have been the reason why many middle class advocates of Hindu nationalism began to speak the language of liberal and secular nationalism by the late 1920s Certainly the Hindu Sabha ites elected to the municipal board had not done all that the most ardent Hindu nationalists had hoped Different factions in Lucknow s Hindu Sabha refused to cooperate even before the municipal elections of 1925 [49] Even the convincing victory of the Hindu Sabha ites in the December 1925 elections where most sitting (Swarajist) members were defeated brought little joy to some of the reportedly extreme elements within the local Sabha who felt that the people winning on the Sabha s platform were not fully committed to its agenda [50] Their fears may have been justified as one of the first decisions of the new board was to declare that it was not going to take any action on the Aminabad Park dispute [51] By the middle of 1926 at the annual meeting of the UP Hindu Sabha in Lucknow Jai Dayal Awasthi, one of the extreme Hindu Sabha ites called for the resignation of municipal

[49] PAI 5 September 1925 362 (CRR)
PAI 19 December 1925 545 (CRR)
PAI 26 December 1925 557 (CRR)

board members if they did not have the courage to settle the Aminabad affair and make room for those who could[32]

The pessimism which betrayals factionalism and infighting among the Hindu Sabha ites must have engendered among their wider constituency among Lucknow s middle class was reflected in *Madhuri* s editorial on *Sangathan* in July 1927 Just three years after the journal had claimed that it was folly to oppose Hindu sangathan *Madhuri* displayed a very different attitude towards the cause Sangathan it argued had not succeeded beyond some rhetoric and speech making Though Hindu Sabhas had begin their work with much fanfare it said they had done nothing beyond provoking Hindu–Muslim conflicts (*Madhuri* January 1924 817 July 1927 858–9) By 1928 *Madhuri* was even critical of the Hindu Mahasabha an organization it had vehemently supported earlier (*Madhuri* 18 August 1923 258–9) *Madhuri* now advised the Mahasabha that rather than take up all questions from a communal perspective it should concentrate on the internal strengthening of the Hindu community The editors regretted that Mahasabha leaders did not realize that at the moment nationalism rather than communalism was the need of the hour (*Madhuri* June 1928 715–16) This mood of disaffection with the Hindu Sabha agenda may have contributed to the apparent growth in support for a more plural and secular vision of the nation The success of the anti–Simon Commission agitation in 1928 led by the former Swarajists undoubtedly contributed to this change in opinion too By 1929 this mood allowed Khaliquzzaman as the local Congress leader to win back his chairmanship of the municipal board By 1930 *Sudha* described the activities of Congress protestors falling under the batons of the police with quite the same fervour as it had described Hindu martyrs (*Sudha* June 1930 595–6)

In June 1927 *Madhuri* published an editorial on Nationalism and Religion The editors argued that nationalism is the greatest invention of our age Nationalism they argued like nothing else had the power to unite the entire population of a country and to motivate every individual to give up his or her life for the nation In fact they claimed nationalism has taken the place of religion (*Madhuri* June 1927 704) Using examples from Turkey China England and the United States the editors tried to demonstrate that throughout the world religion was being superseded by national considerations It is only our ancient India which is trying to run in the opposite direction they said mockingly Perhaps it does not know that this is the twentieth century and not the fifteenth Hindus

[32] PAI, 1 May 1926 229 (CRR

and Muslims in India still thought that by adding to the numbers of their religious community they were making real progress Such weak walls of religion would not be able to withstand the tide of nationalism it [nationalism] has prevailed over all beliefs in all the nations of the world as it will here (ibid)

In the late 1920s then *Madhuri* was taking the official line of the Congress party clearly distinguishing between nationalism and other sectarian or communal ideologies But what was it about this sort of secular nationalism which appealed to the middle class? For one the Congress under Gandhian leadership transformed the nature of public arena politics quite dramatically Under the firm control of a middle class leadership something approaching mass politics became part of the anti colonial struggle The number of people as well as the form of politics changed Direct confrontation with colonial authorities rather than petitioning mass mobilizations rather than the soliciting of educated opinion became the hallmarks of the Gandhian non cooperation movement It is estimated that in the Lucknow town and district combined about one hundred thousand primary members of the Congress were recruited during the non cooperation and Khilafat movements (Bharatiya 1961 74) Hundreds of Hindus and Muslims from Lucknow courted arrest and were sentenced to prison terms ranging from six to eighteen months for participating in the movement (ibid 80–93) This was achieved by reaching out to classes which had never before been included in nationalist politics Quite apart from massive rural recruitment even within Lucknow the Congress tried to recruit the support of washermen and horse carriage drivers for its cause To encourage people to boycott foreign cloth and to wear the homespun *khaddar* whose use Gandhi and the Congress were propagating washermen and women were asked to charge a higher rate for foreign cloth and a lower one for khaddar.[53] The Lucknow municipality controlled by the Congress leaders apparently made it evident that it would not grant carriage drivers licences to operate in the city unless they used khaddar[54] It is unlikely that the subtle and not so subtle pressures of the Congress leaders were unambiguously welcomed by subaltern groups

Political success did however inspire a new confidence in the politics and rhetoric of middle class activists Gandhian nationalism has been

[53] PAI 13 May 1923 839 The move was apparently not successful as the city police managed to persuade the *chaudhri* (caste head) of the *dhobis* (washermen and women) to advise his caste fellows against the measure Ibid 872 (CRR)

[54] PAI 5 May 1923 276 (CRR)

interpreted as a transcultural protest against the hyper masculanist world view of colonialism (Nandy 1983 48) Yet there was much in the public sphere activities during the Gandhian leadership of the anti colonial movement which would have satisfied the hyper masculanist longings of the middle class too Sewa Samiti and Khilafat volunteers played an important role in the mobilization of popular opinion during the first non cooperation and Khilafat In 1919 volunteers were used to close down shops during the satyagraha in Lucknow and for collection of donations at railway stations [55] These volunteers were organized on extremely militaristic lines Sewa Samiti volunteers in the United Provinces were said to favour wearing khaki uniforms Leaders of the Samitis took military officers ranks and one even wore a military officer s insignia and a belt and sword Khilafat volunteers on the other hand dressed up in imitation Turkish and Arab uniforms and sometimes carried swords and were trained in military style drill [56] In 1930 some of the songs used by the Congress *prabhat pheris* (early morning processions borrowed from a style of Hindu worship) also exhibit a distinctly militaristic ethos with references to nationalist troops (*faujis*) seizing swaraj at the command of their captain Gandhi [57] A town Congress committee meeting in January 1929 decided to provide their recruits full regimental training whereas a similar meeting almost a year later decided to form three regiments of volunteers with some recruits drilled by a high school drill instructor [58]

To point this out is not to argue that people participated in the movements against British rule only to satisfy hyper masculinist longings The new forms of politics that these movements initiated for example picketing boycotts and courting arrest were certainly exhilarating for the people involved (see Bharatiya 1961 Khaliquzzaman 1961 also Nehru 1982 chs 9–11) Participation in nationalist activities at this time entailed significant personal sacrifices Prominent Lucknavis like Harkaran

[55] UP GAD file 604 1920 Note on the Volunteer Movement in the United Provinces 18 December 1919 by P Biggane Asst to the Dy Inspector General of Police Criminal Investigation Department 5–6 (UPSA)

[56] Ibid 'Note on the Volunteer Movement in the United Provinces Supplement to the printed note dated 18 December 1919 9–10

[57] One of the songs read *ham sab parade fauji captaan hamaara Gandhi aagyaa usi ki lenge lenge swaraaj lenge Tettees karor fauji ran saath e chalenge Gandhi hukum karenge lenge swaraaj* Roughly translated this says We are all troops in battle and Gandhi is our captain, we obey only his orders we will seize swaraj we will Thirty three crore troops [a crore is ten million] will march into battle together Gandhi will give the order we will seize swaraj All India Congress Committee (AICC) file 31/1930 Songs of *Prabhat Pheris* (NMML)

[58] PAI 19 January 1929 18 PAI 8 March 1930 168 (CRR)

Nath Misra Mohanlal Saxena and Sheikh Shaukat Ali gave up their professional incomes as lawyers to participate in the movement in 1920 Rafi Ahmad Kidwai Khaliquzzaman and many other students boycotted universities and colleges while many prominent Lucknavis gave up honours and titles they had received from the government (Bharatiya 1961 69–70) We cannot also ignore that during these times when middle class activists could mobilize large numbers of people behind their political agenda Congress nationalism too could satisfy a craving for self respect similar to the demands of respectful cooperation from Muslims At the peak of the Khilafat and non cooperation movement in 1921 a Congress volunteer would go around town making public announcements to the beat of a drum prefacing his announcement with a statement that went *Khalak Khuda Ka Mulk Hindustan ka aur Hukum Congress Ka* which roughly translates as In the world of God, the country of Hindustan and by the order of the Congress (Bharatiya 1961 97) In May 1930 Congress volunteers had the confidence not only to peacefully resist police authorities but actually directly attack a police station even after cavalry and infantry units had been moved to the city as precautionary measures [59] As much as the championing of Hindu rights involvement in projects of seizing swaraj of organizing troops under the captainship of Gandhi satisfied a need for self respect in the public domain of colonial Lucknow

Of course not all middle class Hindus in Lucknow constantly changed their positions between advocating Hindu and secular style nationalism There were undoubtedly many middle class Hindu activists who distanced themselves from Hindu nationalism altogether Mohanlal Saxena is one Lucknow Congressman whose name does not figure in association with any Hindu Sabha politics in Lucknow On the other hand someone like Shivanath Sharma the editor of *Anand* appears to have maintained a fairly consistent anti Muslim position Disgusted with the Congress s new found passion for the Khilafat cause, the satirist suggested that the words to a well known nationalist song be now changed to *Vande Khilafatam* (we bow to you O Khilafat) and actually wrote a full parody of the song (Shivanath Sharma 1927 126–32) At the same time like the editor of *Madhuri* (who also edited the anthology of Sharma s essays) Shivanath Sharma was very much concerned with nationalist politics though he was an old style moderate Congressman who did not approve of Gandhian mass politics (Bhargava Introduction ibid) Nevertheless the sort of extreme Hindu nationalist position taken by Santram in an article

[59] PAI 31 May 1930 696 (CRR)

in *Sudha* which argued that British rule was preferable to an alliance with Muslims was definitely not the prevalent opinion among the main stream Hindu militants writing in Lucknow (*Sudha* May 1929 423–5)

To highlight shifts in middle class politics is not to argue as some nationalist historians are tempted to that nationalism prevailed over communalism in colonial India Rather the aim of highlighting the constant changes in the middle class political and cultural agenda through the 1920s is to point out that secular and Hindu nationalism were not separate distinct entities Instead of dichotomizing nationalism and communalism support for both sorts of projects among Lucknow s public sphere activists has to be located in their search for sources of self respect and empowerment Shifts and oscillations between the two political positions represented more than simply political opportunism or hypocrisy on the part of middle class activists Nor can one relate the vacillation of middle class Hindus only to changes in local or national political alliances though these undoubtedly played some part Rather a closer examination of the way that the modern, assertive Hindu nationalism was constructed by middle class activists in colonial Lucknow suggests that the impermanence of middle class political identities can be traced to limits created by contradictions constitutive of the class

REASONABILITY AND THE LIMITS OF HINDU NATIONALISM

If the ideology of Hindu nationalism emerged from concerns of middle class politics it was also limited by them Not only did the advocates of Hindu militancy in Lucknow periodically move between articulating support for secular and Hindu nationalist positions very often their vacillation was evident in the same articulation Even journals like *Madhuri* and *Sudha* apparently uncompromising in their defence of Hindu interests in 1924 demonstrate distinct ambiguities in their content For instance *Madhuri* in subsequent pages of the same issue in 1924 published a highly partisan account of the riot in Lucknow followed by an emotionally charged plea for peace between Hindus and Muslims Describing the terror of the riot torn days *Madhuri* recounted in great detail the atrocities committed by Muslims mentioning only in passing that at some places Hindus too beat up Muslims for reasons other than mere self defence In contrast, it described how Musiim ruffians deceitfully attacked lone Hindus from behind and assaulted Hindu women children and old people Hindus the journal averred never exhibited such diabolical behaviour as many Muslim men and women passed unharmed through Hindu localities Moreover *Madhuri* s account of the riot played up the disloyalty

and ingratitude of Muslims describing a Muslim wrestler who had been brought up on Hindus grain since birth and who had trained under a Hindu *ustad* (teacher) yet set out to attack Hindus with a sword (*Madhuri*, September 1924 284–5)

Nevertheless on the very next page *Madhuri* carried an editorial piece expressing great regret at the disharmony between Hindus and Muslims in a city like Lucknow In an impassioned plea for communal amity titled *Lucknow Ke Hindu Musal'man Kya Aise Nadaan Hain?* (Are Lucknow s Hindus and Muslims Really So Foolish?) *Madhuri* drew on the long history of peaceful cooperation between the two communities in Lucknow and the close economic and social ties which still remained As landlord and tenant as shopkeeper and customer as trader and artisan, or peasant and landlord *Madhuri* argued interdependence bound Hindus and Muslims of Lucknow together Neither community could leave India both had to live in the same place dependant upon each other s aid and assistance Why has God given us reason and intellect? How are we superior to dumb animals? the editors asked lamenting the fact that Hindus and Muslims had suspended rational judgement and were ready to take arms against each other at the slightest pretext At a time when all other nations of the world were forsaking religious fundamentalism *Madhuri* said, fighting over aarti and namaaz was ridiculous It warned Hindu and Muslim alike against the self appointed custodians of religion who were only seeking to fan the flames of animosity and exhorted peace (ibid 286)

To understand this ambiguity we need to pay close attention to the manner in which journals like *Madhuri* and its middle class contributors constructed their advocacy of the Hindu cause From the very beginning the assertion of Hindu rights in the colonial public sphere drew upon the image of the weak or oppressed Hindu The roots of this discursive trope in the politics of a colonial middle class who keenly perceived the oppressive present obviously had a great deal to do with the construction of such images (see Chapter Three above) Bishan Narain Dar had likened Hindus to the proverbial dog whom any stick is good enough to beat with (Dar 1893 30) In the rhetoric of journals like *Madhuri* or *Sudha* too the Hindu was portrayed as weak lacking the spirit of unity and at the mercy of the aggressive violent Muslims who were able to intimidate the Hindus kill them insult their women and children etc

The trope of the oppressed Hindu was in fact crucial to the discourse of Hindu militancy It enabled Hindu publicists to represent all their own activities as defensive manoeuvres *Madhuri* through much of the 1920s was a vocal and unabashed champ on of Hindu Sangathan efforts. In

June 1923 in an editorial piece titled Sangathan for Self Defence *Madhuri* insisted that Sangathan be the primary objective of every polit ical leader as well as the Hindu public We do not suggest this enterprise as a means of attack against anyone it claimed we stand only for self defence and for the service of the nation community and religion (*Madhuri* June 1923 580) Shuddhi or the purification of Muslims and Christians which was the other major plank of Hindu activists in the 1920s was depicted as the reconversion of Hindus who had been lured away from the fold through force or duplicity (*Madhuri* April 1923 469)

It was this mode of defensive mobilization which allowed even the most militant Hindu demagoguery to claim that its objective was simply Hindu awakening and not opposition to Muslims An editorial article in the May 1924 issue of *Madhuri* dwelt on the issue of Muslim conduct towards Hindus The article however reveals much more about attitudes of Hindu partisans and their perceptions than it does about Muslim con duct (*Madhuri* May 1924 558–60) *Madhuri* s account began with re counting riots where Muslims had attacked Hindus Ranging from events in Bengal the United Provinces Delhi and the Punjab to the Muslim ruled native states like Bhopal and Hyderabad *Madhuri* described in stances of forced conversions unprovoked attacks on Hindus or assaults on Hindu women Despite this hostility the editors claimed that their intent was not to execrate Muslim behaviour Rather than criticize them the article said, we would like to praise their qualities of vigilance brother hood, their love for their community and their unity (ibid 559) In con trast *Madhuri* pointed out Hindus shared no such spirit of community which was why even a handful of Muslim ruffians had the temerity to molest, in broad daylight the mothers and sisters of thousands of Hindus in front of their very eyes

With the reference to Hindu women, *Madhuri* s dispassionate narra tive style changed abruptly as it launched into a fervid denunciation of Hindu weakness The editors wrote

> O cowardly Hindus till when will you not be rid of your disunion and cowardice? in front of your eyes your women your children, and your desti tute co religionists are the victims of diabolical attacks and inhuman atrocities and yet you can only watch and see like a cripple you don t retaliate like impo tent men all you can do is cry and bemoan your fate! A curse on your very birth a shame on your cowardly life! (ibid.)

Immediately following such fiery prose however, the editors admitted that their words might have been too harsh Some might even consider them improper they said! But they explained these are the outpour

ings of a heart which has been wounded time and again (ibid) The objective of their incendiary prose the editors said lay in their hope to instigate if even in a few hearts the urgent need to ameliorate the pitiful condition of the Hindu community In particular, they wished to inspire the Hindu youth to devote their lives to defend dharma and jati (religion and community) (ibid) The youth they said should leave political passions aside to devote themselves solely to the task of propagating the cause of their community It was more important to protect their religion and community than even to obtain swaraj (self rule) for if there is no community (jati) left who then will reap the fruits of swaraj? Yet it is telling that this plea for Hindu mobilization is immediately followed by a significant qualification The youth the editors said should not harbour an uncharitable or discourteous disposition in their defence of the community and religion Their objective should be not to increase animosity towards their Muslim brethren rather they should aim to generate feelings of love towards them their motto should be self defence not revenge' (ibid)

Madhuri adopted a very similar position when referring to the riots in the town of Saharanpur in 1923 which was titled Atrocities of Muslims (*Musalmanon ka Atyachaar*) After a summary of the Muslim atrocities the article said that reading and hearing about such things the Hindu who is not moved to tears one whose blood doesn t boil with indignation the one who does not [then] accept the need for Hindu sangathan, is no Hindu at all (*Madhuri* August 1923 258) This passionate advocacy of the Hindu cause was once again followed by heaping shame and curses on Hindu pusillanimity Yet immediately following the fiery rhetoric came the clarification With these words we are not inciting our [Hindu] brothers o fight All we say is rise strengthen yourself acquire enough might to defend yourself remove all fear and trepidation from your hearts and gather your courage and resolve (ibid)

The trope of the beleaguered Hindu allowed the discourse of Hindu militancy to adopt a tone of reasonableness in its confrontation with Muslims While there was clearly also a discourse of unreasonableness— which represented Muslims as inherently wicked fanatic and prone to convert by the sword—almost every article or editorial about Muslim aggression and Hindu weakness was qualified with the assertion that the authors did not hate all Muslims nor were they asking Muslims to give up their religious, cultural and even political practices All that the Hindus were asking claimed *Madhuri* was the acknowledgement of the Hindu right to propagate their religion in the same way that Muslims exercised theirs (*Madhuri* April 1923 464)

Reasonability based on the image of the oppressed and weak Hindu race produced a discourse in which a militant Hindu nationalism hostile to Muslims could, with some degree of internal consistency claim not to harbour any ill will towards Muslims All that the Hindus were demanding journals like *Madhuri* and *Sudha* claimed were the rights which were legitimately theirs Their own efforts were merely attempts to awaken a supine divided and uncaring Hindu community to the consciousness of its rights and to the possibility of its destruction What they were opposed to was Muslim unreasonableness What they condemned was the Muslim proclivity towards violence their fanaticism particularly when this resulted in the oppression of the Hindus Thus the *maulvis* (Muslim clerics) the *jahil* (unenlightened) Muslims and of course the ever present Muslim ruffians were the main objects of execration On the other hand there was always room for positive evaluation of the educated reasonable Muslim leadership For instance *Madhuri* and *Sudha* frequently expressed admiration and envy for the greater unity brotherhood and devotion to religious and community causes among Muslims

Given the representation of the Hindus as the always aggrieved party and the tendency of editors of journals to give vent to emotional outbursts' of their injured hearts there were more than a few slippages into unreasonable sweeping indictments of the entire Muslim community In the editorial on the Saharanpur riots for instance *Madhuri* wrote People say these attacks [on Hindus] were the acts of ruffians We ask are all of the 40 000 Muslims of Saharanpur ruffians then? (*Madhuri* August 1923 258) The implication of course was that the entire Muslim population of Saharanpur *was* in some way or the other involved in the riots The most common charge hurled at the entire Muslim community was that they harboured ambitions of restoring Hindu–Muslim relations to the levels which had prevailed under Muslim rule in India [60] In describing riots in 1923 *Madhuri* argued that it has to be said that in most cases our Muslim brothers by beginning the fighting displayed their tendencies of a hundred–hundred and fifty years ago (*Madhuri* June 1923 579) But even this exhibition of unreasonable criticism was ultimately indicative of the extent to which the discourse of Hindi militancy was grounded in reasonability Journals like *Madhuri* and *Sudha* never tired of reminding Muslims that the times of Muslim rule were over that these were different times when Hindus were no

[60] For example Muslims still dream of a time a hundred and fifty–two hundred years ago when they could practise unbridled oppression (*Madhuri* April 1923 464 also *Madhuri* November 1924 567)

longer willing to suffer unreasonable persecution (*Madhuri* April 1923 464)

The very reasonability of the prose of Hindu militancy however also set limits to the rhetoric of Hindu militancy The logical culmination of the sort of inflammatory rhetoric used by the champions of Hindu rights should have been a call for the destruction of their perceived oppressors the Muslims For instance the *Madhuri* article on Muslim conduct towards Hindus or the one on the Saharanpur riots after the lurid descriptions of Muslim atrocities on Hindu women and children and the provocative challenge to Hindu men s virility should logically have called for an all out attack on Muslims Yet this step was not taken In fact, what followed were injunctions to Hindu youth to maintain decorum in their dealings with Muslims and the deliberate reminder by the editors that their words were not meant to promote aggression against Muslims There is no reason to believe that these injunctions or clarifications were merely an element of double speak added on to an essentially communal agenda For an independent journal with no stake in electoral politics there was no reason to temper its rhetoric in such a Machiavellian manner It was in fact, the reasonability of Hindu assertiveness which limited the scope of its own rhetoric Publicists who represented the justness of the Hindu cause by criticizing the unjust use of brute power by Muslim fanatics could not overtly advocate the same course of action to their readers The discourse of reasonability which the Hindu middle class used to justify its anti Muslim orientation prevented it from articulating a full throated Hindu supremacist position Hindu nationalist militancy which emerged from the politics of middle class liberalism was ultimately also limited by its roots in such politics

The reasonability which characterized the rhetoric of journals like *Madhuri* represented more than the limits of a narrative strategy Given the social and political world inhabibited by the middle class reasonability and caution had to be the watchwords of their political strategy too and placed serious limits on how far they could go in the pursuance of their political agenda Although middle class Hindu activists were fond of passionate rhetoric denouncing Muslim aggressors and calling for Hindu unity and strength they were quite averse to militant action which might result in disorder and violence As President of the local Hindu Sabha in Lucknow Narain Swami was one of the most prominent champions of Hindu causes in Lucknow in the 1920s In 1924 he led the dispute with the local British owned railway company about the proposed demolition of temples which ended in victory for the Hindu Sabha In September of 1924 Narain Swami was prominen n he protests aga n governmen

restrictions on Hindu *Ramdol* processions Later that month he was active in negotiations with the government and Muslim leaders both before and after the riot over the issue of prayers at Aminabad Park [61]

Whenever popular sentiments appeared to get out of control however Narain Swami s role was one of moderation On 5 September 1924 an estimated crowd of 8 000–10 000 wanted to defy the government restrictions on the number of people allowed in a Hindu religious procession Narain Swami intervened to calm down this agitated crowd [62] Following the riot of September 1924 he prevailed on the Hindu Sabha in the face of great opposition from more militant voices not to launch a satyagraha on the issue of prayers at the Aminabad temple [63] Ultimately a compromise on the issue of Hindu and Muslim prayers in Aminabad Park was worked out by the Deputy Commissioner of Lucknow By the terms of this compromise Hindu aarti had to stop at a regulated time and the Muslim namaaz begun only after that time Lucknow s Hindu Sabha under the presidency of Narain Swami though communicating a token protest at restrictions on Hindu worship ensured that the Hindu prayers were stopped a few minutes before the deadline agreed to in the compromise [64]

Although middle class Hindu activists were perfectly willing to express provocative and inflammatory rhetoric on Hindu–Muslim relations as *Madhuri* did for instance their passion and vitriol usually *followed* riots or was expressed about events removed from personal experience The immediate response of middle class public sphere activists to a serious public disturbance in their own midst was subdued and often non partisan In September 1924 the *Indian Daily Telegraph* carried extremely provocative articles and headlines expressing a Hindu partisan position but only after the riot By 18 September, with order restored the paper s editorial column was titled Is Lucknow Safe for Hindus and described Muslims as the aggressors who had caused the riot and made the city unsafe for Hindus [65] By the 23rd of the month it was running headlines which claimed Lucknow Hindus Terrorized [66] During the days that violence was at its peak however the paper s reportage was relatively sober The 14 September edition of the paper ran the headline Terrible Riot Situation The following report dispassionately described the events which

[61] UP GAD file 479 of 1924 (UPSA)
[62] *Indian Daily Telegraph* 6 September 1924 in UP GAD file 479 of 1924 (UPSA)
[63] *Indian Daily Telegraph* 2 December 1924 ibid
[64] *Indian Daily Telegraph* 13 December 1924 ibid
[65] *Indian Daily Telegraph*, 18 September 1924 ibid
[66] *Indian Daily Telegraph*, 23 September 1924 ibid.

had occurred in Lucknow since the night of the 12th Relating the at mosphere of the city the paper said where Muslim elements preponder ate the Hindus are terrified and do not issue out for fear of being beaten up Where Hindus preponderate the Muslims are in peril [67] Terror or fear was not the exclusive property of Lucknow s Hindu population at a time when they were concerned for their own safety nor was the blame

A variety of factors then contributed to the reasonableness of Lucknow s middle class Hindu activists There was certainly the issue of threats to their personal safety that prompted their hesitation about riots But their advocacy of reasonability can also be traced to the fact that such situations initiated popular political activity and always included the possibility of acquiring a momentum they could not control This aversion to popular politics was of course not limited to middle class involvements in projects of religious identity Popular initiatives were of ten able to appropriate middle class agenda and representations to their own ends (Pandey 1982 Amin 1984) Middle class leadership though it depended upon mass mobilization for its own success always attempted to control and discipline such initiatives (S Sarkar 1983a Kapil Kumar 1984 Guha 1992 Amin 1995) However as the case of Lucknow dem onstrated, the hesitation over participation of subaltern groups in polit ical action seriously limited the scope of their own agenda in that middle class champions of Hindu militancy could not articulate a full throated supremacism If middle class concerns initiated the construc tion of Hindu nationalism the same middle class concerns also circumscribed that cultural and political construct The reasonability of the rhetoric the presence of other modes of self assertion, and the need to maintain control over the masses they mobilized ensured that there was always room for alternative loyalties Though a product of middle class politics Hindu nationalism was also limited by its roots in middle class politics

CONCLUSION

Hindu nationalism of the twentieth century clearly built on the discur sive templates produced by middle class politics of the late nineteenth century which had liberated religion from quotidian existence and divi sions to relate it exclusively to the idea of a religious community In the changed contexts of the twentieth century however, this nationalism increasingly though not exclusively came to define itself through it

[67] *Indian Daily Telegraph*, 14 September 1924 ibid.

opposition to Muslims Hindu nationalism of the late nineteenth century had come into being as means of self assertion of the emerging middle class of colonial India In certain contexts as for example in Bishan Narain Dar s report on the Azamgarh riots this self assertion could exhibit latent anti Muslim sentiments This variety of Hindu nationalism—relatively benign towards a Muslim Other by the standards of the 1920s (and even more so by that of the 1990s!)—was deployed by Hindu middle class activists for their own empowerment in a variety of arenas including local and provincial politics The primarily anti Muslim orientation which the discourse of Hindu nationalism acquired in the twentieth century can in part be traced to challenges which the Hindu middle class and the Congress faced from Muslim politics starting in the early years of the twentieth century

The politics of the first two decades of the twentieth century also transformed the very notion of a Hindu community Nineteenth century activists began the process of the reification of Hindu ness But an environment in which political power was increasingly coming to be defined by demographic weight of putative religious communities produced further reification till being Hindu became little more than a numerical abstraction in middle class political discourse Such a reified notion of the community allowed Hindu activists to represent the rights of a monolithic Hindu community against an equally reified, though now thoroughly demonized representation of the Muslim But like their nineteenth century counterparts middle class Hindu activists of the 1920s also revealed the contradictions of their own politics particularly in their hesitation over supporting Hindu militancy when manifested in riots or other popular action Moreover in their writing as much as their political actions Lucknow s Hindu middle class activists flitted between loyalty towards an exclusivist Hindu Sabha ite and a pluralist Swarajist Congress vision of the nation

Rather than understand these two positions as exclusive of each other, this chapter has tried to argue that both militantly anti Muslim Hindu nationalism and a secular inclusive vision of the nation in different ways fulfilled the empowering agenda of the Hindu middle class Mobilization around the secular nation associated with the Indian National Congress publicly and successfully challenged colonial authority to provide one sort of empowerment as the leaders and representatives of a potentially independent or self governing nation Representing a nation defined above sectarian loyalties moreover could and was used to label the demands of different groups as anti national while ignoring the latent Hinduization of the secular national culture (Chatterjee 1993 113) At the same time

representing the rights of a community defined as the majority and exhorting a supine Hindu community to rise to defend itself against attacks by Muslims provided another source of empowerment for middle class activists Contrary pulls of an agenda that was ultimately concerned with middle class empowerment however ensured that they could adopt neither position consistently Ultimately middle class politics in colonial Lucknow constantly oscillated between the two visions of the nation unable to commit itself to either Identities produced through middle class interventions in the public sphere remained inherently impermanent

CONCLUSION

Reflections on Fractured Modernity

How do we account for the world the middle class made in colonial north India? How do we understand what drove the people who sought to define themselves as a middle class towards politics that appear to have been quite contradictory? How for instance could they simultaneously represent a theoretically equal public yet so blatantly exclude the lower classes from any imagination of that public? How could middle class discourse simultaneously applaud the achievements of women in public life yet also insist that women remain confined by a *stridharma* whose most evident characteristic was husband worship? How could it simultaneously call for a Hinduism above caste differences yet reinforce these distinctions in other contemporary writing? How could middle class political activists simultaneously subscribe to plural nationalist and an exclusivist Hindu nationalist agenda?

To answer these questions the preceding chapters suggest we first need to better understand the middle class To be middle class in colonial Lucknow (and probably elsewhere in the world too) was not simply a result of having a certain income occupation or even educational training Undoubtedly these factors limited who could or could not be classified as middle class but ultimately being middle class was a project It was through defining their distinction from other social groups through their activities in the public sphere that a group of educated men and later women, were able to define themselves as middle class Distinction here worked in both senses of the word not only did cultural projects of the middle class distinguish it from other social groups the Indian middle class also contended that the norms and values it was seeking to propagate were superior to those of the existing aristocratic elites lower classes and ultimately to those of the British rulers Empowerment—both *against* established social and political elites and *over* other subordinated sections of society—was at the heart of the projects constituting the middle class

Critical to this project of empowerment were cultural strategies that sought to recast respectability Whether it was critiques of lifestyles

followed by the nawabs or taluqdars or new notions of patriarchy or reconstituted notions of being Hindu or indeed novel ideas about Indianness—middle class efforts at empowerment sought to transform existing cultural norms and invent new ones which would better reflect their own ideas and social positions Many of these efforts at reconstructing norms of respectable conduct drew heavily on western ideas and institutions In fact there is little doubt that the idea of a middle class was itself derived from existing British models It was the appropriation and deploying of what may well have been a mythical model created first in Britain (Wahrman 1995) that initially allowed educated men to represent themselves as a progressive virtuous and modern middle class in colonial India A significant part of the agenda of improvement that the Indian middle class deployed in the public sphere borrowed heavily from that of their Victorian counterparts in Britain New ideas about the value of public opinion notions of bourgeois domesticity and the vilification of the courtesans a new anthropocentric religiosity and nationalism were certainly products of a derivative discourse (Chatterjee 1986) Yet the middle class in colonial India was not simply a result of transplantation of English or western values and attitudes and given the circumstances could not be that

Middle class Indians quickly adopted those aspects of the western model which best suited their own interests and life situations Thus a wide variety of middle class representatives came to stress the importance of individual achievement over birth, or the desirability of thrift and industry over conspicuous consumption. The middle class of colonial Lucknow for instance found the critique of the idle or decadent upper classes particularly useful in its attempt to contest the cultural economic and political significance of nawabs and taluqdars in the city and it was equally quick to appropriate the vocabulary of the British social purity movement in its desire to diminish the role of the courtesans Yet as important as its derivative agenda were the ways in which the middle class of colonial Lucknow did not conform to the ideal type of a progressive liberal and meritocratic class Such deviations too need to be located in the circumstances of their lives Once again ideas of respectability are critical to any understanding of how and why the middle class of colonial Lucknow came not only to share agenda with the ideal typical western middle class but also embraced positions quite at variance from that model It is important to note for instance the upper caste and Ashraf background of the men who fashioned themselves as a middle class in colonial Lucknow Though they may not have been a part of the elite in nawabi society neither were they from families without some social

standing in pre colonial Lucknow Their new ideas about respectability new strategies of empowerment also utilized these existing resources of status and prestige

Thus while middle class activists embraced ideas of a public sphere in their imagination only people like themselves below the *amra* (nobility) yet above the *aawaam* (commoners) constituted the public as Sarshar s comment in Chapter One makes apparent There was no way that respectable men like themselves would consider discussing issues of public import with *khansamas* (cooks) orderlies barbers or others of that ilk In fact the mere thought of sitting at the same table with them or even the *prospect* of having to deal with lower class men in positions of authority was an abomination to them Similarly while new ideas about women s rights as well as their own changing lifestyles directed the reconstitution of gender relations these changes did not usher in a simple discourse on equality of the sexes Rather, middle class interventions produced new ideas (shared in many cases by men and women) that blended bourgeois domestic freedom with notions of gendered respectability drawn from much older patriarchal traditions like the *Manusmriti* Similar contradictions are evident in the middle class ideas about religion New compulsions of defining their distinction from the British led middle class activists towards constructing identities based on religion This entailed the construction of a new Hinduism shorn of divisiveness its contradictions and myriad social and cultural practices Yet it became impossible for even the most ardent votaries of publicized Hinduism to repudiate their upper caste status and endorse this vision of Hinduism unambiguously Similarly middle class nationalist activists or commentators on the national movement found they could garner or vicariously enjoy a certain kind of respect by supporting either a plural anti colonial nationalism, or a more sectarian anti Muslim Hindu nationalism In short though cultural entrepreneurship in rewriting norms of respectability empowered the middle class over other social actors in Lucknow and in that sense was central to its very constitution, such cultural reinscriptions were not recorded on a *tabula rasa* Their efforts very obviously deployed newer ideas and used new possibilities that opened up with colonial rule yet also retained many older resources of respectability not quite consistent with the rhetoric of Enlightenment freedoms The modernity which the middle classes constructed in colonial India, therefore used the new and the old looked ahead as well as back A fractured modernity produced the sort of contradictions noted in this study of colonial Lucknow

But how are we to understand these contradictions of middle class politics and their fractured modernity? Are they simply pointers to the

impossibility of a true modernity in a world peopled by *homo hierarchicus* as Louis Dumont s work suggested echoing the sentiments of many generations of Orientalist scholars and colonial administrators before him (Dumont 1970a also Appadurai 1988 Dirks 1992 van der Veer 1993)? Do these contradictions does the fractured nature of their modernity alternatively prove right those critics who argue against using the category of middle class in Indian history altogether? Colonial India never had an Industrial Revolution which these scholars assume as a necessary precondition for a strong and vibrant middle class (Torri 1991 Oberoi 1994) Or should we follow the lead offered by Partha Chatterjee among some other scholars of the Subaltern Studies collective and trace the contradictions of the middle class to the colonial milieu which compelled the Indian middle class to define its modernity in ways very different from that of the West (Chatterjee 1997)? Underlying all these questions ostensibly about the peculiarities of the Indian case are comparisons between the failures lacks or deviations of the Indian case and certain originary models of middle class ness To try and answer such questions then we too need to undertake a comparative exercise to contrast the Indian experience with the metropolitan middle class which operate as the standard against which this Indian case is being implicitly judged

Even a cursory examination of the literature on the middle class in England for instance reveals significant variation between a messy and complicated historical reality and the model of a progressive enlightened middle class emerging like the rising sun out of the Industrial Revolution (Wahrman 1995 1) Such scholarship for one questions the causal connection between rapid industrialization and the emergence of a middle class society But it also reveals that public sphere interventions were critical in establishing certain myths about middle class formation, which now stand as models against which non western historical developments are judged (Owensby 1999) General surveys of European history moreover reveal that much like the Lucknow case hierarchy was very much part of the domestic as well as public life of the mid to late nineteenth century European bourgeoisie Eric Hobsbawm notes that ideas about representative government and civil rights and liberties were a part of the political vocabulary of the middle class but only so long as they were compatible with the rule of law and with the kind of order which kept the poor in their place (Hobsbawm 1989 287) If we take into account attitudes towards women children and servants then the structure of the bourgeois family flatly contradicted that of bourgeois [public] society (ibid 280) In fact Hobsbawm goes on to argue that a sense of superiority was central to the constitution of the bourgeois man, and the monopoly

of command—in his house in his business in his factory—was crucial to his self definition (ibid 288) Evidently then concerns with empowerment and the retention of older (albeit transformed) social prejudices were as much characteristic of the European middle classes as they were of those in India

These are of course fairly well known facts about European nineteenth century history and could well be elaborated upon in more detail The model of a liberal democratic progressive middle class which seizes power from a decadent enfeebled feudal order to reorder society and politics along the lines suggested by the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment is a myth which has been undermined repeatedly by historians of Europe (Mayer 1981 Blackbourn and Eley 1984) The really interesting part about all of this of course is that even masses of counter factual examples have not dented the power and persistence of the model Thus despite recognizing differences between different European middle classes despite acknowledging the importance of self constitution in the making of this class despite surveying literature that points to the persistence and power of older ideas institutions and classes in European society in the long nineteenth century a recent review article on the subject concludes that the existence of the middle classes in Europe depended on certain historical constellations among them the tradition of the Enlightenment which were specific to European history It is not very likely Jurgen Kocka concludes that they will be found in many other parts of the world (Kocka 1995 806 and *passim*)

One may dismiss this as yet another example of Eurocentric historiography but the issues that such reviews raise are of greater significance simply because of the assumptions which underlie Kocka s understanding of history and its implications for those of us who work on non European histories If the import of such essays was simply to point to the specificity of historical experience in different parts of the world, there would be no reason to disagree However despite recognizing the regional variations within Europe and the different meanings and political valency that equivalent words carry in different European languages and even the fact that the category in fact has been used as a polemical or affirmative code word in public debates Kocka affirms the existence of a pan European middle class (ibid 783) What allows him to do this—despite plenty of evidence to the contrary even from the authors he reviews in this essay—is the notion of a shared liberal tradition to be traced back to the European Enlightenment, which apparently makes industrialists and professionals living under different economic and political circumstances a large con t a middle class Implicit in this formulation

however unintentionally is also the assumption that other social groups who constitute themselves as middle classes in other parts of the world must ultimately also be judged by these standards

This of course is exactly the point Dipesh Chakrabarty makes in his thoughtful much cited essay discussing the impact of modern historical categories on subaltern histories (Chakrabarty 1992b) Chakrabarty argues that in the world of scholarly knowledge only Europe —by which he means a model of modernity derived from western history—is theoretically (i e at the level of the fundamental categories that shape historical thinking) knowable Dominance of the West over the rest of the world has meant that models derived from the history of this Europe are universalized so that histories of the aptly termed non western regions of the world are always compared to supposedly universal models and found wanting The universalization of western modernity perpetuates the dominance of Europe over Others through the representations of all histories as History (Prakash 1994 1484) Even more problematically perhaps the universalization of modernity means that historical developments that are different can only be evaluated either as emulations deviations or as failures Chakrabarty s approach certainly helps to rethink solutions to one of the central problems in understanding Indian middle class projects—namely the persistence of the ideal typical model Or to paraphrase that famous song why couldn t the Indian middle class be more like the English? Chakrabarty s analysis helps explain how Kocka can confidently assert the middle class ness of Europe while denying its exportability It also explains why historians of the non western world and I include my own work in such characterizations find it impossible to do the same Even while pointing out the limits of European modernity I cannot but engage extensively with the history of Europe thus pointing to the strength of Chakrabarty s argument

Acknowledging the impossibility of escaping modernity or of constructing a historical discourse outside of these categories of modernity Chakrabarty rejects the possibility of a history framed by indigenous or nativist categories and instead asks historians to provincialize Europe by showing the ambivalences contradictions the use of force and the tragedies and ironies that necessarily form a part of the universalization of modernity (Chakrabarty 1992 21) As one part of establishing the provinciality of the claims of modernity Chakrabarty demonstrates aspects of radical difference between constructions of a modern domesticity in colonial Bengal and the ideal type of bourgeois modernity This is a theme he takes up in more detail in a later essay where he shows the

Bengali modern exemplified here by the neologism *grihalakshmi* (to translate this as goddess of the home would be to undermine the point Chakrabarty wishes to make) This modern construction he argues is constituted by tensions as it seeks to incorporate both the historical and modern as defined by the ideal type of western modernity and the anti historical modern tied to mythico religious time which escapes and exceeds bourgeois time (Chakrabarty 1994 81) There is much in the Bengali modern which is derivative of the modernity brought by colonialism he argues but it is also a modernity which seeks to evoke formations of pleasure emotions and ideas of good life that associated themselves with models of non autonomous non bourgeois and non secular personhood (ibid 84–5)

In pointing to both the complicity and difference of Indians with the ideal types of modernity Chakrabarty reflects the orientation of the current Subaltern Studies project in which a notion of the subalterns radical heterogeneity with, though not autonomy from, the dominant remains crucial (Prakash 1994 1482) Much of what this book says about the nature of the modernity constructed by the middle class of colonial Lucknow draws heavily on the ideas of the Subalternists Yet there are also important points of difference But let me begin with some extended excerpts from a wonderful lecture by Partha Chatterjee which sums up his position on the subject of modernity Chatterjee begins by making the unimpeachable argument for acknowledging different modernities The forms of modernity will have to vary between different countries depending upon specific circumstances and social practices he says and in fact if there is any universally acceptable definition of modernity it is this that by teaching us to employ the methods of reason universal modernity enables us to identify the forms of our own particular modernity (Chatterjee 1997 8–9) Within this particular modernity Chatterjee like Chakrabarty identifies important points of difference including profound ambivalence towards the modernist enterprise itself The reasons for this ambivalence? There must have been something in the very process of becoming modern that continues to lead us even in our acceptance of modernity to a certain scepticism about its values and consequences (ibid 14) The answer in other words is colonialism Somehow from the very beginning we had a shrewd guess that given the close complicity between modern knowledges and modern regimes of power, we would for ever remain consumers of a universal modernity never would we be taken seriously as its producers It is for this reason that we have tried for over a hundred years to take our eyes away from this chimera of a universal modern ty and clear up a space where we might become the creators of

our own modernity (ibid) Or to quote another passage

> Ours is the modernity of the once colonized The same historical process that has taught us the value of modernity has also made us the victims of modernity Our attitude to modernity therefore cannot but deeply be ambiguous But this ambiguity does not stem from any uncertainty about whether to be for or against modernity Rather the uncertainty is because we know that to fashion the forms of our modernity we need to have the courage at times to reject the modernities established by others (ibid 20)

The presupposition through this entire lecture and in fact through much of the formally post colonial writings of the Subaltern Studies collective is the essential difference in our modernity

But was our modernity really so different from theirs ? The history of Lucknow examined in this book certainly does not suggest that the colonial context created a middle class and a modernity that was so different from that of the West as to forbid comparative exercises altogether One important similarity that we can note between the Indian and English middle classes is that in both cases a small and relatively privileged group of men, and later women made their distinctions from other social strata by virtue of being representatives of a modern social order There is no doubt that middle class visions of modernity in India were contradictory Thus modern politics unleashed by the middle class in colonial India simultaneously spoke in the voice of reason and sentiment of the need to preserve tradition and initiate radical change advocated liberty and authoritarianism equality and hierarchy often at the same time All the public sphere projects of the middle classes were shot through with these inconsistencies and contradictions and these were constitutive of middle class politics indeed of the modernity they initiated in colonial India Yet such anomalies were not unique to the Indian case

There is little doubt that in the exclusion of the lower orders of society from participating in the public sphere as in many other aspects of the modern that was created by the middle classes in Lucknow they drew upon assumptions based on an older hierarchical tradition of social relations Yet this was hardly a unique prerogative of the middle classes of colonial Lucknow or for that matter of colonial India Their European counterparts too had little room for women or the lower classes in the public they represented Like the European bourgeois public sphere examined by Habermas theoretically the public sphere of colonial north India was a forum open to all Yet practically both public spheres were the ce of literary adepts who set or could fol ow new of public

conduct (La Vopa 1992) Given the class and gender exclusionary nature of bourgeois practice Habermas s model of the public sphere has been assessed as an ideal of critical liberalism that remains historically unattained (Eley 1993 289) The formation of Birmingham s later eighteenth century associational networks the creation of an elite club in early nineteenth century German small towns and the creation of lit erary societies in mid nineteenth century Bohemia as much as the asso ciations clubs and societies of colonial Lucknow all involved questions of *interest prestige* and *power* as well as those of rational communication (ibid 307) A contradictory historical practice at odds with the ideology of egalitarianism it propagated remained at the heart of the public sphere in both cases For much of the same reasons as their European counter parts the Indian middle class too initially excluded subaltern groups and based this exclusion on the presumed natural inferiority of these groups or excluded them on account of their lack of education on matters of public import Both in Europe and India the public sphere thus became the site where for most part educated professional men constructed a highly gendered, exclusive and hierarchical middle class

The exclusion, marginalization and recasting of women through insti tutions of the public sphere is yet another instance of the way in which this quintessentially modern institution worked in comparable ways in India and Europe Joan Landes made a forceful case for the way in the public sphere was gendered at the moment of its production in revolu tionary France Though there were certainly important differences created by time and place one can see for instance a parallel in the marginalization of the courtesans of Lucknow and the aristocratic women of the *salons* of pre revolutionary France as a new gendered public sphere emerged in both contexts (Landes 1988) Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall s work also demonstrates some important parallels in the way the emergence of public associations increased the confidence of middle class men and contributed to their claims to political power and deliber ately excluded women from this public world In fact the authors argue that the power and confidence of middle class men was predicated upon their position as heads of households representing their wives children servants and other dependants (Davidoff and Hall 1991 416) This rich study of the making of a middle class in nineteenth century England has as its focus family life and new ideologies of domesticity which became an integral part of the formation of a gendered middle class world Parallels between the domestic ideals articulated in texts like *Strisubodhini* and the didactic literature aimed at the inculcation of new ideas of domesticity in nineteenth century England, are quite striking

The point of these comparisons is not of course to suggest an identity between two quite dissimilar contexts There were important differences in historical and cultural context between the groups who constituted themselves as middle class in Birmingham and Lucknow as indeed there were between the middle classes of Lucknow and say Calcutta Madras or Surat which did not have quite the same history of either British occupation or indeed the recent history of an indigenous ruling elite The important position occupied by merchants in Surat as opposed to Lucknow where the richer merchants had historically kept a low profile is just one instance of these differences (Haynes 1991 Oldenburg 1989 Sahai 1973) The objective then, is not to claim that middle classes across the world were identical, but to point to the similarities in the nature of middle class modernities constructed in different parts of the world to point to the extent to which all such politics deviated from the ideal type usually attributed to a hyper real Europe

Rather than reinforce the binary oppositions between the West and the rest the comparisons suggest that we take into account the extent to which serious social historians of western modernity themselves point out that middle class ideas involved a jostling together of the concepts of liberty with those of patronage and deference [and] the contradictory ways in which purer discourses of philosophers and ideologues are reworked within common sense (Davidoff and Hall 1991 16) We also need to take into account the extent to which the ideas about domesticity and separate spheres which Davidoff and Hall see as purely modern phenomena in fact had a much longer history (Vickery 1993) Following this critique of Davidoff and Hall it seems that like the middle class men of colonial Lucknow the English middle class too reworked existing older ideas about patriarchy and also no doubt patronage and deference to produce a modernity where the old and new jostled together

The best instance of such jostling perhaps comes when we consider the role of religion in the formation of a modern class and the modern nation. The presence of religion in politics of the public sphere is normatively regarded as a failure of modernity or its lack Religion almost by its modern definition if we follow Talal Asad (1993), should remain confined to the private realm When religion refuses to behave in its appointed role it is usually dismissed with labels like fundamentalism or communalism which question the modernity if not the morality (are they really that different?) of the practitioners of such politics Western commentator on Indian history or politics have found it easy to dismiss such politics a. a result of primitive or primordial attachments of non western peoples

and such a historical stereotypes have been reinforced by representations in the contemporary media (Ludden 1996 Pandey 1990) This of course is the ideal type of modernity The lived reality has been considerably different Davidoff and Hall point to the centrality of the Church in the production of middle class identities in Britain and identify religious belonging as a central plinth of middle class culture (Davidoff and Hall 1991 73) Though the narrative of modernization emphasizes the decline of religion and growing secularization of society as an essential part in the emergence of the modern West' recent scholarship questions such assumptions There is on the one hand Jose Casanova s work on the place of religion in modern society which points out that deprivatized religion can under certain circumstances have a formative role to play in modern politics (Casanova 1994) Peter van der Veer (1999) cautions against accepting the secularization thesis too easily by pointing to the important role played by Evangelical Christianity and the revival of Roman Catholicism in producing the modern subject and shaping political culture in Victorian Britain. In fact he makes a case for arguing that modernity was sacralized at the moment of its production not just in India but also in Europe

Once we accept that modernity in the West despite its ideal type representations did not automatically usher in a new secular order, but indeed was constituted by existing religious discourses the case for Indian exceptionalism—whether based on backwardness and primordialism, or guided by the intent of demonstrating the radical heterogeniety of a colonial modernity—becomes weaker Rather than understand the religiosity of Lucknow s middle class as a lack or failure where it strove for and ultimately failed to achieve the secular modern ideal we can look at it as an active producer and product of a sacralized modernity which in turn produced a modernized religiosity in colonial India This was a modernity shaped by its own concerns and contexts and its rhetoric and politics were in turn shaped by it Religion, or rather self definitions based on religious categories became a critical part of the modern self created by the colonial middle class This self definition also helped shape the later political commitment to a more militant anti Muslim Hindu nationalism Yet the contrary impulses at the heart of the middle class agenda also prevented it from articulating a full throated Hindu chauvinism The identities produced by modern politics were thus protean and impermanent Rather than a lack of modernity therefore there is a good case to be made for understanding the sort of impermanent identities we see in colonial Lucknow as products of a fractured modernity it shared with its counterparts in Europe and elsewhere

Based on this comparison then it seems that neither India nor the West actually live up to the ideal typical model of modernity Given the similarities between the experience of historical modernities in India the West and indeed other parts of the world as well it seems that we do need to reconceptualize this model Starting from our study of the middle class of Lucknow and then comparing the contradictions in its politics with similar phenomena elsewhere suggests that despite a more or less singular ideal type of modernity derived from a very selective reading of a western historical experience in practice modern politics and social relations always reveal their fractures and disarticulations It was a fractured modernity that created the circumstances for and set limits to the various cultural and political projects of the middle class in colonial India Looking at how the middle classes were constituting themselves and the world around them in colonial India therefore not only presents an opportunity to better understand the nature of modernity in India but also helps formulate a category to comprehend this phenomenon in other parts of the world

This is not to say that the idea of a fractured modernity is absolutely novel Traditionalism even anti modernism has been recognized as very much a part of the making of the modern in the United States and a valorization of the simple life as well as a fascination with the traditional and the primitive was an important component of this middle class ideology (Lears 1981 Shi 1985 Hinsley and Wilcox 1996 for India see Ghosh 1999) Marshall Berman whose work is one of the best known celebrations of modernity, submits that modernity as it is experienced is full of contradictions dissonance and conflict (Berman 1988) It should come as no surprise however that it is primarily historians and scholars of colonized or subaltern groups often struggling to define and sometimes defend the modernity of the societies they study who are more alert to these fractures in the practice of modernity its variations from the ideal type and in the attempts to rethink the category Writing about the middle class in Brazil Roger Owensby observes

> the changes generally thought to be characteristic of modernity have been deeply intertwined with what are usually called traditions In Brazil thus the market mentalities meritocracy and egalitarianism professionalization consumer culture and social identities typically connected with the notion of the middle class are inseparable from a disdain for manual labor an insistence on social hierarchy and the presumed naturalness of patronage time tested values and practices constantly renewed and folded into modern social life (Owensby 1999 7)

Lila Abu Lughod in an introduction to a set of essays about feminism and

modernity in the Middle East suggests that the best way to understand the developments there would be to ask how modernity—as a condition—might not be what it purports to be or what the language of enlightenment and progress tell us it is (Abu Lughod 1998 7)

Of course at least two generations of nationalist Marxist and now Saidian scholarship have made us aware of the ways in which the self styled representatives of western modernity in the colonies revealed the illiberal stratum of ideas practices and institutions that comprised their modernity It is however more recently that these histories are being used to question the categories upon which so much of colonialism itself rested Ann Stoler and Frederick Cooper argue that colonial projects showed up the fundamental contradictions inherent in bourgeois projects and the way universal claims were bound up in particularistic assertions (Stoler and Cooper 1997 3) Paul Gilroy in his fascinating study of the Black Atlantic suggests a more fundamental reconsideration of the category one that would put slavery and terror at the very heart of any definition of modernity (Gilroy 1993) Ann Stoler s own work on colonialism and sexuality along with many others demonstrates that much of what we know of modern bourgeois identities was formed in relation to colonial encounters in which ideas of racial distinctions were central (Stoler 1995 Burton 1999) Uday Mehta goes as far as to argue that ideas about race were built into the philosophy of eighteenth century liberalism itself (Mehta 1997) Middle class Englishmen excluded women as well as non white people from the benefits of liberalism which they clearly deployed for their own empowerment (Hall 1992) Antoinette Burton s work on the other hand shows us the extent to which British feminism, which drew upon the legacy of liberalism and modernity to shape its concerns was deployed to empower middle class British women at the expense of Indian women (Burton 1994) In all of these cases a close examination of the discourse of modernity deployed reveals its illiberal and perhaps non modern sub strata

The point of this comparative exercise is to argue that if our goal is to destabilize the categories derived from a selective reading of western history in other words to provincialize Europe one does not have to abandon comparative history altogether. One does not necessarily have to dichotomize the historical experience of the West and the rest because this strategy may itself reinforce ideas of an originary unfractured and monolithic western modernity and its derivative and hence necessarily lesser non western counterparts This book suggests an alternative Closely examining the construction of modernity in a specific context it show that far from being a totalizing or monolithic ideology modernity in colo

nial India was built upon an existing set of ideas which it transformed in new ways Emerging through the public sphere this modernity was very much a product of middle class activists and reflected the contrary pressures of the constitution of that class Deploying their cultural capital to maximum effect middle class men were able to transform existing ideas of social conduct cultural preferences and politics in ways that allowed them to emerge as the representatives and leaders of Indian society Middle class ideas though they were certainly novel were not a monolith Not only were there competing opinions on issues among the middle class a close examination of middle class ideas reveals a number of contradictions Thus its modern ideas about politics contained elements drawn from much older and hierarchical ideas about political and social organization Its belief in secularism coexisted with the importance of religious identities its belief in progress was simultaneous with its advocacy of tradition its nationalism was complicit with what has been termed communalism

A comparison with the modernities of the western and other parts of the non western world suggests that similar though obviously not identical fractures contradictions anomalies were constitutive of modern ideas institutions and practices as well In Lucknow as in other parts of the world modernity was built with a variety of resources including much that modernity labels either tradition or non modern The traditional and the non modern, whether it is in the form of patriarchal ideas racism notions of patronage and deference or religion, never quite disappears but does become a resource for the modern Moreover, if following the example of Lucknow we recognize the deployment of the ideal typical modernity more as a strategy of empowerment over various others than a reflection of lived reality then we can also better understand its evident contradictions To enforce or maintain power over subordinate groups—whether it was the middle class over lower classes in the public sphere of Lucknow Europeans over colonized natives or their own working classes the Hindu middle class over Muslims or indeed British feminists over their Indian sisters—it became necessary in certain situations to also resort to the darker side of the discourse of modernity to take recourse to the language of race hierarchy and communalism over that of egalitarianism, improvement liberal nationalism or global sisterhood

In contrast to the dichotomizing of modernities I suggest that a better way of provincializing Europe is by highlighting the fractured nature of modernity itself Rather than see the operation of modern politics in India as yet another case of Indian exceptionalism this book argues that modernity in India was neither inadequately modern nor a special–case

scenario of a colonial modernity The middle class shapers of modernity in colonial India worked in ways that were similar to their counterparts in other parts of the world including the West Cultural projects of becoming middle class ensured that they used a variety of resources to construct notions of being modern that emulated but were also at variance with the ideal type in other words their modernities were inherently fractured Examining the emergence of a middle class in India therefore not only allows us to comprehend the apparent inconsistencies of middle class politics in the colonial milieu but perhaps also suggests a theoretical framework to better understand the working of modern politics in much of the world today

To argue for a fractured modernity is not to deny the extent to which ideas practices or institutions associated with modernity have contributed to possibilities of power and freedom not only for elites but also subordinate groups across the world Especially as illiberal and chauvinist politics appears to be taking a prominent place in many parts of the world whether it is India or the western world the norms and values associated with ideal typical modernity seem particularly attractive Whether it is Jurgen Habermas calling for the completion of an unfinished project of modernity Marshall Berman contrasting the freedoms offered by modernity against the Grand Inquisitor–like religious leaders of Iran or prominent cultural historians turning their back on their own critiques of modernist paradigms the growth of intolerance the seeming acceptance of right wing agendas as common sense appears to be driving them all back into the arms of progressive histories Contemporary political crises make the ideals of the Enlightenment seem particularly attractive (Habermas 1997 Berman 1988 [1] Hunt 1989 Appleby et al 1994) [2]

In India too the growth of Hindu supremacist forces intolerance and the lack of dialogue between political elites and those they claim to represent has led to calls for regrouping around modernist and secularist ideals (S Sarkar 1993, also S Sarkar 1997) Certainly in times like this

[1] It is interesting to note that though Berman is quick to note a resemblance between Khomeini and the Grand Inquisitor his index to this study of modernity since the sixteenth century has no entry for religion or indeed a place for terms like race or racism slavery or indeed Nazi or Hitler —all ideas institutions or individuals which must surely figure in any serious discussion of modernity

As one instance of the change in position note the contrast in the evaluation of the contributions of Foucault (or for that matter Joan Scott) in Lynn Hunt s introduction to her earlier collection of essays (Hunt 1989 1–22) with those in the later text (Appleby et al 1994 198–237) Admittedly the latter is a co authored text one must however, presume that all authors including Hunt also individually endorse the positions they together argue for in the text

there is great comfort to be derived from being able to have a clearly mapped out political agenda around which to regroup and fight the good (and necessary) fight But will the invocation of modernity help? Is that the answer? Drawing broadly from the study conducted in this book I would like to suggest otherwise Even more so than at other times a time of crisis like the present probably calls for a clear recognition that modern liberalism or the ideas of the European Enlightenment do not provide us with all the answers or even a clear alternative to emerging right–wing politics This is not just a third world view which suggests that western modernity has been oppressive for those whose histories are different' On the contrary it is time to recall with renewed emphasis the paradoxes and fractures that inhabit the heart of modernity Invoking classical Enlightenment thought certainly has the potential to be liberatory but also oppressive as Foucault s work has demonstrated beyond doubt Constructions of a modernist enlightened Hinduism produced a Vivekananda who invoked the *dandranarayan* the idea that God resides in the humblest of folk and a scathing critique of brahmanical ritualized Hinduism Yet the same Vivekananda also left a legacy which can be appropriated by present day Hindu supremacists as Sarkar s own work demonstrates (S Sarkar 1992b also Raychaudhuri 1988) The history of twentieth century nationalism witnessing both Nazism and decolonization evidently demonstrates both liberatory and oppressive possibilities of modernity (Nairn 1975)

In colonial Lucknow this book has attempted to argue authoritarianism, chauvinism and inequity were as much constitutive of middle class modernity as democracy secularism and egalitarianism Rather than look for the roots of illiberal politics in a lack of modernity in disenchantments with the promises of modernity (Fox 1996) or even a different' and colonial modernity this book suggests that such politics finds its origins in the very constitution of the modern Ideal–typical modernity never has and nor at present provides us with a necessarily democratic and inclusive alternative to the politics of illiberalism That is an alternative towards which we have to struggle without blueprints from a mythicized past

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Index